

THE
PROFESSOR
AND THE
PETTICOAT

ALVIN SAUNDERS
JOHNSON

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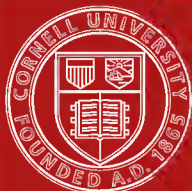
The professor and the petticoat.



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AND THE PETTICOAT**



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THE PROFESSOR AND THE PETTICOAT

By

ALVIN SAUNDERS JOHNSON



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FOREWORD

ON LIFE AND LEARNING

IN Pergolino's Garden on the flats of Asuncion, Texas, where San Jacinto Street abuts upon the river, there dwells a wonderfully accomplished dog, known as Professor Sciarli. All the ordinary circus tricks, and many extraordinary ones, he does past perfection. He jumps through hoops, like any circus dog; but they are the tiniest hoops, held highest over your head! Any well-trained dog will catch a knife thrown up with judicious skill; but Professor Sciarli makes nothing of a knife thrown up into the air by a casual visitor, and not an ordinary stage-dagger, either, but a bloodthirsty Texas bowie knife, a knife that will cut you of its own volition if you don't watch out. Throw up a deck of cards, and in their descent Professor Sciarli will pick out the queen of spades. I've not only seen him do it, but I've thrown up the deck myself, after reassuring myself that there was only one queen of spades in it.

In all the ordinary affairs of dog life, however, Professor Sciarli is under a most serious handicap. At a severe look from a common dog of the street, he will put his tail between his legs and yelp for rescue. A wretched little coyote pup, also a denizen of Pergolino's

Garden, will with complete impunity bite little triangular patches out of the Professor's hide. An ordinary cur would straightway shake its life out. The Professor holds the general opinion of dogdom on the subject of cats, but never did the fattest, sleepest cat fail to find a tree before the Professor had decided where to insert his teeth.

Approved is the Professor by the alien race of men; handicapped and thwarted in his own racial concerns. Yet, are we forced to say that his adventures among his kind would therefore lack interest, to a discerning mind?

The reader will see, in the foregoing, an apology for this book. It is concerned, in the main, with the adventures of a scholar, more or less human. A Ph.D., Harvard (*summa cum laude*). One who once sat at the feet of the greatest philosophers of the known world (if a Harvard man, who shouldn't, may say it) and learned many things that might possibly qualify him for association with beings of a higher sphere, and that do actually handicap him in his relations with his own kind. If you are of those who take satisfaction only in the play of the fittest with the fittest, if your hero must be the richest, the most athletic, the most enterprising of men, your heroine the most beautiful, the most capricious and the most yielding of ladies, this book may be a disappointment to you. But if you

are of those who delight in life, however smothered in convention, if you are capable of discerning the faint glow of humanity even through the opaque mask of learning, bear with me a little while.

**THE PROFESSOR
AND THE PETTICOAT**

CHAPTER I.

THE VOICE OF TEXAS

THE Chief was away, and the office was marking time. The ancient history editor was narrating a modern tale to the Oriental editor, who was waiting distractedly for a chance to break in with an Occidental joke. The geographer was dozing, and the biography expert was reading a novel. A spirit of trade unionism was in the air, as the Chief was away. Even the office-boy was on strike: I had called for copy several times, without attracting his attention. This I did not greatly regret, for I had on my desk a ponderous letter which held out to me hopes of a better lot than drudging in a New York encyclopædia office.

“We have learned through the Southwestern Teachers’ Agency”—so ran the document—“that you are a candidate for a chair of philosophy. Professor Williams, of our faculty, is retiring from active teaching, with the universal regret of the University. We are seeking a successor to him; and while we feel, of course, that his place can never be filled, yet, from the highly eulogistic letters we have received from the distinguished scholars under whom you have been trained, we

feel that we are justified in believing that you would hold high the banner of philosophic idealism in the great Southwest. Our University is not so old nor so distinguished in the eyes of the world as that in which your abilities have won such high respect; yet its prospects are most brilliant. Our greatness lies not in the past, but in the future. Its realisation will demand the labours of many brave and able men, among whom, I trust, we shall number you. Please to signify, at an early date, whether you would accept an appointment if tendered you.

(Signed)

“HENRY RUGGLES BRETT,
“President Asuncion University,
“Asuncion, Texas.”

Holding high the banner of philosophic idealism—that would surely be a rôle more worth while than cutting copy in an encyclopædia office. But where under the sun was Asuncion? I abstracted an atlas from the desk of the dozing geographer, and scanned the map of Texas eagerly. The map was too complex: I never could find Asuncion in the tangle of insignificant towns. I returned to the geographer’s desk, and plucked at his shoulder.

“Sykes! Where the deuce is Asuncion, Texas?”

“In Texas,” he grumbled. “Don’t you bother me

again till the Chief gets back." And not another word could I get out of him.

A happy thought struck me. I'd ask Powers, the biology editor. He was from Denison, Texas, and ought to know.

"Tell me, Powers, just where is Asuncion, Texas?"

"How should I know?" demanded Powers. "You fellows from those two-by-four New England states imagine that everybody must know all the towns in his state. Where is Gladys Forge, tell me that? It's in West Virginia, probably nearer to Worcester, Massachusetts, than Asuncion is to Denison."

I saw there was nothing to gain from questioning Powers. He probably knew, but you never could get truth out of him on the subject of the great state of Texas. I returned to my desk.

"Under another cover" President Brett had sent me a catalogue of the University of Asuncion. I turned its leaves. On the first page, a list of faculty names, short, but rich in degrees. Then many pages describing at length the courses offered. I turned to the section devoted to philosophy. Heavens, what a learned man Professor Williams must be! It required twelve pages to describe his courses—there were twenty or more of them—philosophies ancient and mediæval and

modern, philosophies moral and philosophies natural. Verily, his place could never be filled. At any rate not by me.

The latter half of the catalogue was devoted to illustrations in half-tone. First, of course, were views of the college buildings. There were Newton Hall, Hall of Arts, Berkeley Hall and Theology. They all looked alike, long and low, with deep-set windows and wide eaves making fine, oblique shadows in the sun. Further comparison of the pictures suggested to me that they might all be of one building, photographed from different sides, and this suspicion was supported by a picture of Administration Court, which was enclosed on all sides by walls of structure identical with that of the four Halls. There is nothing immoral in padding a university catalogue. Other universities make four students out of one; why should not Asuncion University make four buildings by the same process? At any rate, Asuncion was evidently a progressive institution, for succeeding pages showed the "elevations" of a library, the cornerstone of which had already been laid, and the elevations and ground plans of Galen Hall and Calhoun Hall, destined to shelter prospective faculties of medicine and law. No considerable plant is required, to be sure, for the propagation of philosophic idealism. Still, a discouraged feeling was creeping over me.

But this feeling was dispelled by another picture, entitled, "On the San Juan Obispo."

In the foreground appeared a stuccoed boat-house, flanked by wonderful palms with flowering creepers on their shaggy stems. In the middle ground was a wide pool, mirroring the cypresses climbing the precipitous slope in the background. Dim, white-clad figures, were floating on the pool in canoes. I gazed at the picture for a long time. Life, I thought, must be strange and quiet and delightful on the San Juan Obispo.

There was a stir in the office: everybody was at work again. Some one had seen the Chief returning. The office-boy brought me a vast armful of articles—some typewritten, some scrawled in longhand. On each an editor had noted instructions: "Cut 250 words." "Cut as much as you can and return for counting." A hideous task was mine. Imagine a wordy article on, say, "Carpets." You read it hastily: this phrase is superfluous, out with it; this paragraph trivial, run your pencil through it. You reach the end of the article, and turn back to estimate your space. You have killed fifty words too many: you have to put some of that rubbish back.

And that is only the least of your woes. Those articles you are handling so roughly are the product of learned men, who quite unscrupulously wrap their hearts up in their MSS. Your cutting may have

greatly improved their articles—it usually does. But the day seldom passes when a heart-rending wail does not come in to the Chief concerning the excision of some cherished passage. To your own discerning mind it was only a hang-nail you removed; to the writer, it was a vital organ. The Chief comes to your desk with a sheet of mutilated proof. “Put that stuff back, and cut out an equal number of words somewhere else.”

A dog’s life is the official cutter’s. I had accepted it only for the reason that in the previous year there had been a frightful glut in the philosopher market, and I was one of the new Ph.D.’s. for whom there was no call. But now a chair was within my grasp, a chair under the palms, down on the San Juan Obispo.

That evening I spent in calling on Texans of my acquaintance, to learn all I could about Texas. Many things I learned, past, present and future; and many more things that were none of these. There was one point of agreement in their several accounts: that no man should linger in noisy, dirty, mercenary New York if the fair State of Texas were softly calling him. I consulted all available literature on Texas, especially the M. K. T. and I. and G. N. railway folders, and my enthusiasm for the state fired up wonderfully. I interviewed a travelling salesman of my acquaintance. He grinned. “Do you know what Sheridan said of Texas?” Of course I did, but I

let him tell it—that old, old joke you have heard so often, which doubtless will appear, somewhat sophisticated in form, in 22nd century versions of Mother Goose. I asked a physician for an estimate of the Texas climate. He shook his head: “Don’t go there. You haven’t enough pigment. The sun will first drive you crazy and finally it will kill you.” Then, dropping his serious tone he inquired, “Do you know what Sheridan said about Texas?” “Yes,” I said. But he told it just the same.

It really wasn’t worth while to pursue the inquiry farther. The expatriated Texans were all loud in their praises of Texas; non-Texans were all obsessed by that joke. Rather for the purpose of publishing the fact that a position had been offered me than for any other reason, I called on the professor of philosophy in a New York college and asked his advice.

The Professor sat back in his chair and laughed slyly.

“Do you know what Sherman said about Texas? He said: ‘If I owned both Texas and the Inferno, I’d let Texas and take up my residence in the Inferno.’”

“It wasn’t Sherman,” I retorted in disgust. “It was Sheridan. And he didn’t say ‘the Inferno.’ Sheridan was a real man, and didn’t balk at real words, even if they did burn his tongue.” My mind was made up now; just why, I can’t say. I was going to Texas.

CHAPTER II

TO THE LAND OF THE RACE PROBLEM

My duties in the University of Asuncion would not begin until near the end of September. But to remain four months away from my dreamy San Juan Obispo seemed a martyrdom. Naturally, all my friends advised me against spending the summer in Texas. Even the Texans themselves admitted that it was not wise to go out of one's way to encounter a Texas summer. I found at last one man, from Yuma, who had the kindness to give me the sort of advice I wanted.

"Better go down at once," he said. "It will be hot and you will be pretty uncomfortable for a while. But in a state like Texas you simply make up your mind to stand the heat, and it doesn't bother you. If you go now, you will give the sun a chance to peel three or four superfluous Northern layers off your skin, and you'll be in fine shape for work in the fall."

That sounded like common sense. Pleasant common sense, too, in the ears of one who had for two months let his fancy range over the whole entrancing Southwest. I jumbled my personal effects together and purchased my ticket. On a bright morning in June the ferry bore me across the river. The buildings of Man-

hattan passed in slow parade before me: how much hurrying and worrying, how much chicane and despair under their lofty roofs! "Good-bye, old New York," I cried in my soul. "It will be long before I see you again, thank Heaven!"

A day and a half had passed, and I was awaiting the time to board my train in the St. Louis station. It seemed to me that I was already beginning to feel the spirit of the Southwest. The men passing to and fro in the station were different from Easterners: more sunburned, leaner, more muscular. I looked with interest upon every man more bronzed than the average, grimmer of visage or bolder of gait. A Texan, no doubt. To my disappointment, it was not these bold and free personalities, but a decidedly commonplace and timorous crowd that passed through the gate to the M. K. T. train.

My train was the famous Katy Flyer; and she did indeed seem to fly at times. At other times, especially in the dead of night, she seemed rather to get down on the ground and hop. Floods on the Missouri had seriously impaired the track, and my first night was very uncomfortable indeed. At one time, after some frightful jolts, the train came to a sudden stop, and I concluded that we were off the track. I rang for the porter and informed him of my surmises.

"Lor', suh, nuffin's de mattah. Dis ain't rough.

You should 'a' been on de train fo' days ago, befo' dey fixed dis piece o' track. Dey was a mons'ous fat Chicago gen'lman in dat uppah ovah dere, an' he clean fell out of his buhth into de uppah on de opposite side. Dey was two pahties in dat uppah already.—I sho is tellin' yo' de truth, suh."

"Don't you believe a wuhd that niggah says. He's from Texas," said a voice from behind the curtains of the opposite berth. "It was a lowah the Chicago gentleman fell into. The conductah told me about it himself."

None the less, I was inclined to believe the porter. The joltings that night were quite enough to make any tale believable. At length, however, we struck hard ground and firm track, and flew once more.

Kansas and Oklahoma at last traversed, we crossed the Red River and were in Texas. It was early in the morning when I raised my windowshade and looked out upon the state I had been dreaming about. Smiling in the morning sun were long stretches of plain with vast fields apparently planted to beans—no, it must be cotton, King Cotton. I did my obeisance. Flowers by the acre, red, blue, pink, by the railway track, in the pastures and meadows. How is it the Texans in the North never tell you that theirs is the true Flowery Kingdom? It must be because they are as much used to flowers as we in the North are to grass and weeds.

At intervals were groups of houses and cabins, with thin strands of blue smoke rising hundreds and hundreds of feet into the air. The plain of Texas was asleep, but in mansion and cabin ham was frying and corn-bread baking, to celebrate the morn. I knew it, for I smelled them when we stopped long on a siding, waiting apparently for the morning to pass us. The savour of the Texas cooking was exceeding sweet in my nostrils, for I had gone supperless to bed.

On the Katy all sound habits of eating must be abandoned. At proper intervals your train stops "twenty minutes for lunch," and there is a universal rush toward the clanging gong which gives voice to the food. In a trice the whole trainload of passengers are seated, and a platoon of girls moves swiftly along the tables, heaping the diners' plates. It is a pleasant interruption in travel, when it is properly timed. But the Katy crosses many rivers in its course—the flood-cursed rivers of the plains—and at certain seasons, when one river is not raging over its banks and tearing up the track another is likely to be. No merely human management can, under the conditions, run trains on time. You count on making the breakfast station at eight; you actually reach it at eleven. The train then sets to making up time; it isn't worth while to stop at the dinner station; on you go to another bad river, and never make the supper station at all. After you

get into Texas the chances of losing time are doubled. Your train subdivides, and the two sections go on diverging tracks southward, to converge and join again at some important town. If your own section is not late when you reach the town, the other one is sure to be. In sum, my train achieved the feat of losing forty-eight hours in a thirty-six hour run.

The dining stations look the same, from Kansas City to the Gulf. The bill of fare remains the same. Accordingly, you do not at first realise that civilisation changes with your progress toward the South. At my first Texas station I seated myself at table, hat on head, as you learn to do in Kansas and Oklahoma. A queenly person approached me and said very firmly:

“You may hang yo’ hat up, suh.”

I obeyed. As the call, “All aboard!” rang down the dining-room, I rushed for my hat. It was gone and I gazed at the vacant hook in dismay.

The queenly person approached me. “Did somebody steal yo’ hat?” she asked sympathetically.

“Yes,” I replied ruefully.

“Ah think if Ah wuh you Ah’d take anothead.”

“And the gentleman who owned it—what would he do?”

The lady smiled. “All depends. If he wuh from El Paso, Ah reckon he would shute you.”

“Thank you,” I said. “I’ll not throw my head

after my hat." I returned to my car quite gay at heart. This surely was Texas.

At Hillsborough my car was invaded by a group of real Texans, tall men, dignified and muscular, who addressed one another in soft, deferential voices, as "Cohnel" and "Judge." I leaned back in my seat and gazed at the landscape; but soon all my attention was absorbed by the history of a lynching affair that the "Judge" was narrating. Some negro had been accused of insulting a woman, who, as I gathered from the story, was a rather scatter-brained person of no very imposing social position. The judge, according to his tale, arrived on the scene just as the mob was ready to apply the torch.

"I thought I'd take a look at the niggah," said the judge. "So I pushed through the crowd, and the moment I laid eyes on him, I said to myself: 'This is all a mistake.' You see, I knew that niggah. 'Boys,' I said to the crowd, 'you've done made a mistake. I know that niggah. He used to wohk foh me. He's as decent a niggah as you evah saw. Must be you've got the wrong niggah.'

"'The lady identified him,' one of them said. 'We took him to huh twice, and she said, "That is sub-tainly him."' "

"'I tell you what you'd bettah do,' I said. 'You catch anothah niggah, 'bout the same size, an' take

him to huh and say: "Lady, ah you suah this is the right niggah? We don't want to buhn an innocent niggah. Ah you suah?"' Well, they got anotheah niggah and took him to huh, and she said, 'That is suhtainly him.' So they let the fuhst niggah go, and wuh going to buhn the second.

"'Wait a minute, boys,' I said. 'We cain't be too suah of this niggah, eithah. Bettah catch anotheah niggah and take him to the lady and say, "Lady, we ah suhtainly ashamed to bothah you again, but old Judge Meacham has come to town, and he says he won't let us buhn this niggah until you have assuahed us once mo' this is suahly the right niggah. Do you sweah that this is the niggah?"' And the lady said, 'That is suhtainly him. I do solemnly sweah that's the niggah.'

"Well, they let the second niggah go. And the leadah, he said to me, 'Judge, what shall we do with this niggah?' I said, 'Boys, the lady says theh was a niggah, and I nevah contradict a lady. But'—And then somebody calls out, 'Thuh wasn't any niggah.' And the crowd began to laugh and pretty soon they scattahed, and a couple of Dagoes that was hangin' round began to ca'y the pile away foh stovewood."

This surely was Texas, the land of real men. Maybe the judge was inventing his tale; but do you hear such inventions on the Royal Blue or the Twentieth Century Limited?

CHAPTER III

A FINANCIER'S MONUMENT

“ASUNCION, suh,” said the porter in a low voice, shaking my curtains gently. “You can sleep a couple of houahs mo’ if you want to. Dey’ll switch de cah down de track, and leave it till night, suh.”

In fifteen minutes I was out of the car and walking about on the station platform to see what kind of place my new residence might be. On the east side of the track lay the town. I looked down what appeared to be the main street, brick-paved, with two-story red-brick business structures staring at each other from under tan awnings. At a distance of half a dozen blocks a square building in yellow brick and red granite rose toweringly to the height of twelve stories or more—a sky-scraper lost in Texas. After crossing the railway track the street ran westward through two or three blocks of grimy shanties, and narrowed itself to pass between the lofty columns of a suspension bridge. “The San Juan Obispo!” I said to myself, and walked rapidly toward the bridge. The sun was scorching, but on the north side of the street were patches of shade from the shanty gables.

It was a colossal bridge, but the river, what a dis-

appointment! Just a blue trickle of water two hundred feet below me. The ground had been prepared for a big river; on either side of the ribbon of water was a strip of smooth-worn yellow rock several hundred feet wide, with here and there a green tuft of willows, prone but luxuriant. Low water, evidently.

“You must be a strangah, suh,” said a pleasant voice at my shoulder. “We down heah don’t go out a mohnin’ like this without ou’ hats.”

He was a pink, round-faced gentleman of about forty, with pleasant eyes and good-natured smile. He wore a wide-spreading panama, and supplemented its shelter by a green umbrella.

“I am a stranger. I’ve just come from my Pullman. Someone appropriated my hat at a dining station and I’m waiting for the shops to open so I can buy a new one. I haven’t the courage to present myself at a hotel without one.”

“The stoahs won’t open to-day,” my new acquaintance replied. “This is a holiday. You bettah come undah my parasol. Ah’m goin’ up to the University Hotel foh breakfast. You will want to go theah too; it’s the only hotel in town.”

“Holiday?” I queried as we walked toward town. “What holiday is this?”

“June ’Teenth. Niggah holiday,” he explained. “Emancipation day.”

"I am still puzzled," I said. "Do you mean to say that all this town closes up to help the negroes celebrate their emancipation?"

"It suhtainly does," he replied, smiling. "Every single niggah who can walk will be on the street from nine in the mohnin' to two o'clock at night. Every cook and coachman and pohtah in town. You cain't even get one of them to ca'y yo' bag to the hotel. Bettah get it yo'self if you need it befo' to-morrow. Ah'll help you ca'y it."

"Do tell me more about this holiday," I resumed, as soon as I had negotiated my bag out of the hands of the Pullman porter. "It somehow shocks my expectations. I should have supposed that the whites, if they didn't veto it, would anyway ignore it."

"Ignoah it?" My companion laughed. "We couldn't if we wanted to. No niggahs, no wohk. Besides, the town cain't wohk on cold victuals, can it? That's all we get to-day, except at the hotel. But we wouldn't ignoah it, as you say, foh anythin'. Best fun we evah have in town. You come to my room at the hotel, and we'll watch the procession from my window. It's on the second floah front, shady side of the street, best place you could find."

"Thank you," I replied. I wanted to push somewhat further my inquiries as to the holiday, but my experience with Southern friends in the North had led me

to formulate the generalisation that there is a point, not determinable by Northerners, where inquiries touching upon the negro question become offensive. Anyway, we were approaching that colossal building I had seen from the station, and which turned out to be the University Hotel.

“What a building!” I exclaimed, looking up at it. “However did it get here?”

“We’ll go in and have breakfast, and Ah’ll tell you all about it,” said my obliging guide. “My name is Hubeht Mahshall, and I wohk a plantation down the rivah.”

“I trust I may have the pleasure of knowing you better, Mr. Marshall,” I said. “My name is Edward Gresham, and I have just been appointed Professor of Philosophy at Asuncion University.”

“Ah’m pleased to have made yo’ acquaintance, suh,” said Mr. Marshall politely. Then, with a somewhat mischievous smile, he added: “You suahly will be interested in this hotel. All the professors ah.”

“What!” I exclaimed. “Can the professors afford to patronise such a hotel as this?”

“Ah don’t know about that, suh. They nevah do, though. It makes them ve’y hot whenever you ask them, ‘How’s the University Hotel prosperin’ nowadays?’”

We entered a huge elevator and descended, I judged,

forty feet below the street level, to a vast, electric lighted dining-room. There were scores of little tables of polished mahogany. The room, my host told me, could take care of six hundred guests. We two, however, were its only occupants, save for two Italian waiters in white linen. We seated ourselves in range of an electric fan, and I surveyed the decorations of the room.

“Nothing bettah in New York,” remarked Mr. Marshall. “The only fault Ah have to find with this room is, they keep it too cold. They ought to keep a fiah in the heahth.”

Mr. Marshall ordered breakfast for two, consisting almost exclusively of things I had never heard of. Then he sat back in his chair and lighted a cigarette.

“Now Ah’m goin’ to tell you about this hotel,” he said, smiling again. “Did you evah heah of Mistah Rodney Jackson?”

“No,” I replied humbly.

“Mistah Rodney Jackson was ouh most consid’able millionaire,” continued my host. “Made most of his money in cattle and lumbah, but made some money in neahly ev’ything—oil, railroads, cotton. He had two children, but they died, and then his wife died, and left him without anybody to leave his money to. Well, the University saw its chance, and went aftah him

hahd. Gave him all the degrees it had and let him give commencement orations—they neahly killed us—invited him out to dine with ev’y professoh that evah came to Texas. You might have said, foh yeahs, Mistah Rodney Jackson just about lived at University expense. Is that the way they do up youah way?”

“They aren’t quite so enterprising as that,” I replied. “Still, they get the money. And the University here?”

“Well, Mistah Rodney Jackson passed the wohd that they would be most agreeably suhprised ovah his will. And they wuh suhtainly suhprised. He left all his money to them, but in the fohm of a hotel. He appended to the will all the plans and specifications foh this hotel, left it an endowment and drew up a soht of a constitution how it should be run. The net income to go to the University.”

“And how much does the net income amount to?” I inquired with interest.

“Nothing, suh. The hotel nevah has paid expenses, and nevah will. Ah don’t believe Mistah Rodney Jackson evah intended it to. He told old Cohnel White that he was suahly goin’ to have a monument. He wasn’t so suah that the University would evah do any good, he said, but he knew the hotel would. And, beggin’ yo’ pahdon, suh, Ah agree with him.”

“Possibly he was right,” I said reflectively, surveying once more the gorgeous decorations of the room.

“You can see now why the professors up on the hill ah so mighty soah on this hotel,” said Mr. Marshall, laughing merrily.

CHAPTER IV

JUNE 'TEENTH

I SECURED a room so spacious that it could have sheltered a militia company. You had only to set your foot upon the thick nap of its carpet to feel ruling-class sentiments beginning to germinate in your breast. The furniture was gold-inlaid rosewood; whether it was artistic or not is an irrelevant matter; it was sumptuous, and it is sumptuousity, not art, that braces up the soul of man. The bed was huge; modelled upon a cathedral: the dressing table was surmounted by a mirror through which you might, by mistake, attempt to drive a touring car. What a splendid idea, this, of an endowed hotel! For your enjoyment of all this magnificence, you are required to contribute a sum so moderate that you feel very friendly toward the generous State of Texas.

By ten o'clock I had disposed the contents of my bag in the huge drawers and closets—*rari nantes in gurgite vasto*. I dressed myself in my lightest suit, of a stuff described in New York as tropical weight—sufficient index of New York's knowledge of the great world. Such materials they wear in Texas under the blasts of the northers, when the negroes crouch around

fire clay buckets of blazing charcoal, and the master's household cuddles sociably up to the hearth to watch the astonished lizards crawl torpidly out of the blazing logs. I was destined to be hot, but what did it matter? I should be so interested in the procession that no mundane degree of heat would trouble me.

I found Mr. Marshall seated in his room at an open window, amusing himself by throwing handfuls of sticky candy to a mob of negro children in the street. As each handful reached the ground, the children heaped themselves upon it in a squealing, wriggling mass. As soon as the bits of candy, almost unrecognisable under their dusty coats, had been spied out and devoured, the children formed a semi-circle, and looked up with eager faces, black, brown and yellow,—the little boys with wool cropped close, the little girls with multitudinous corkscrew braids bobbing around on their sooty pates.

“Cunning little devils, ahn't they?” asked Mr. Marshall, turning away from the window. “Ah was havin' so much fun with them Ah didn't see you wuh heah. You'll find that chaih comf'table. Ah'll ring foh the waitah. Do you take Scotch or rye?”

“Thank you,” I said, with some embarrassment. I had experienced the consequences of rejecting Texan hospitality in New York. “I think I'd better stick to ice water. I'm afraid of alcohol in this hot weather.”

“You ah wise,” said my host approvingly. “No’th-ehnahs down heah usually make the mistake of drinkin’ too much. They think we expect it of them.”

“Don’t you?”

“Not at all. We don’t expect anything of anybody. That’s why ev’ybody who’s evah been heah loves Texas.”

“Theh’s the music,” said Mr. Marshall. I prepared my ears for the inevitable “Dixie.” How was this? They were playing “Marching Through Georgia.”

“Awfully tactless,” I thought. “I wonder what the whites will do?” I stole a glance at my host’s face. It was quite serene. Could it be that he did not recognise the air?

“I thought you Southerners detested ‘Marching Through Georgia,’” I remarked, sacrificing my discretion to my curiosity.

“Ah must say Ah considah it a pretty po’ tune,” said Mr. Marshall calmly. “But the niggahs seem to like it.”

This was somewhat disappointing. If Mr. Marshall were typical of Asuncion, all the real Texans must have migrated to New York.

The head of the procession had come into sight. Two negro boys, carrying flags, one the Stars and Stripes, the other a flag that I had taken for the private colours of the University Hotel, as it entered so generally into the decorations.

“Lone Stah,” explained Mr. Marshall. “Flag of Texas.”

Next followed the band, gorgeous in scarlet and gold. “That’s mah man Jim, with the big drum.” The drummer, a huge black athlete, looked up, and doffed his hat to Mr. Marshall.

“Ain’t he a beauty?” demanded Mr. Marshall. “Lord, but that niggah can wohk. Wish Ah had him choppin’ cotton today. He won’t be in shape to wohk foh two or three days. None of them ah.”

I ran through all my memories of the literature on the race problem, but there seemed nothing in it to explain this good-humoured acceptance by the masterful Texans of such an interruption of work to celebrate so objectionable a holiday.

“You looked as if you wanted to say something,” said Mr. Marshall.

“I did. But I thought better of it. I was going to ask a question, but I don’t yet know how sensitive you Texans are, in Texas. It was on the negro problem.”

“Theh is no nigro problem in Asuncion,” said my host dogmatically. “But fiah away. Ah assuah you, Ah’m not a shootin’ man.”

“All right. I’ll ask any questions that bob into my mind. But if any of them should happen to seem of-

fensive, it would be a great favour if you'd call my attention to them."

Mr. Marshall eyed me humorously. "Ah reckon you've been associatin' with some of ouah young Texas bloods in the No'th, pu'haps."

"I have."

"Whenevah Ah go No'th," said Mr. Marshall reflectively, "if anybody mentions the wohd nigro in mah presence, Ah put one hand to mah hip pocket and the othah hand on mah breast. Then Ah put on a man-eatin' face and look at the puhson as if Ah wuh sayin', 'You po' mizzable No'thenah, you don' know what a te'h'ble problem we Southehn gentlemen have to contend with.' It makes a great impression on the ladies, suh."

"It's made a great impression on me, too," I remarked.

"Yes, suh. But that was puahly incidental. Puahly incidental, suh."

Now appeared a huge, flower-bedecked float, drawn by four mules. At its front end was a big round pedestal, apparently a hog'shead covered with scarlet cheese-cloth. On the pedestal stood a tall negro woman in white drapery, her buxom figure effectively sculptured by the wind blowing down the street. Her bare black arm held aloft a tinsel torch, gleaming in the sun. In the rear of the float reclined a group of

bronze maidens in white, garlanded with red and yellow roses.

“That’s the Goddess of Liberty and huh handmaidens,” explained Mr. Marshall. “She’s President Brett’s cook, up at the University. Ah reckon Mrs. Brett wohked two weeks gettin’ up that robe.”

“Am I to understand that the mistresses dress up the negro women for this parade?”

“You suhtainly ah. You go anywheah in this town, two weeks befo’ Emancipation day, and you’ll heah the lady say, ‘Ah’m suhtainly puzzled what to give Sally to weah.’ It would break a nigro gihl’s haht if she didn’t shine with the best of them on Emancipation day. Those ah the ex-slaves you see followin’ the Goddess’s chariot. Soht of vet’rans, you see. My, but they ah proud of it!”

There were a hundred or more of them, men and women. Some were bent, and some limped ostentatiously; some of the men were bald and the rest grizzled, as you observed when they doffed their tattered hats to their white patrons at the windows. Wit and humour were flowing freely, to judge from the difficulty of the marshals in controlling the laughter-demoralized lines. The procession had halted, for the Goddess of Liberty was having trouble with her steeds.

“See that old niggah at the end of the line at the right?” said Mr. Marshall. “Looks mighty hahd up,

don't he? Well, suh, Ah reckon he owns prop'ty enough to buy out all you professohs up on the hill."

"But you don't let him vote," I retorted.

"Yes, indeed we do, suh. Theh ain't a man Ah know who wouldn't tuhn out to see he got his vote if anybody tried to throw him out."

"I don't understand you Texans," I said. "You seem so much interested in individual negroes, yet you pursue a systematic policy of keeping the race down."

"Ah don't know about that, suh. Now look at these old nigroes. How many of them look caihwohn? How many look like they didn't have all the food theih old gums can chew? Looks like a happy, caihless old age, don't it?"

I admitted that it did.

"Now," continued Mr. Marshall, "did you evah see, in one of yo' No'thehn cities, such a procession of old people who wohked in the factories befo' the wah?"

"No."

"You couldn't get up such a procession. You've wohked them all to death. If you have any survivahs, in the po'houses, do you think they're as fat as these old nigroes?"

The procession was moving again. "Those pros-p'rous lookin' niggahs ah ou' mechanics. Mighty good ones, too. Up No'th, yo' unions won't let 'em wohk at the trades. Those nymphs followin' ah ou' cooks and

housemaids. Mighty pretty and graceful, some of them, ahn't they?"

I couldn't quite see that. It takes you time to discover the beauty in black and brown, robed in green and purple and crimson and sky-blue. It takes still more time for you to see grace in a gait of swaying angularity.

"These ah the plantation hands," said Mr. Marshall, indicating a motley mob, in which you could recognise the black caricatures from all the "Sunday supplements."

"Peons?" I queried. The procession had passed the hotel, and we drew our chairs back from the window.

"As Ah told you, Ah wohk a plantation down the rivah. Nine or ten thousand acres. Ah have what you at the No'th call a peonage system. Ah have big oak woods, wheah Ah have, Ah reckon, thousands of hogs runnin' wild. In wintah we shoot them and make up heaps of ham and bacon and lahd. Ah have mah own mill and raise mah own cawn. Ah have a stoah wheah Ah sell mostly meal and bacon and lahd,—a little sugar and coffee and tobacco, and calico and jeans. Ah sell on credit, and Ah fix prices right high. A niggah soon eats his haid off, on mah books. Some of mah niggahs ah ten yeahs behind. But if a niggah is sick and cain't wuhk, he gets credit just the same. If he gets old and used up, Ah give him credit: Ah tell him

he can wuhk it out foh me in the next life. If a niggah man runs away and leaves his wife and pickaninnies, she can say, 'Go 'long, you no-account niggah, Ah don' need no ol' black niggah lak you hangin' 'roun'. Cohnel Mahshall, he'll give me credit on his books.'"

"That's a very alluring picture," I said. "But suppose a negro got ambitious, and wanted to look out for himself. What chance has he, under your system?"

"Niggahs ah niggahs, and they don't often get ambitious if you treat them right."

"They might, if you gave them a fair amount of education."

"Theh ah two hundred nigro boys out at the Asuncion A. M. E. College. You'll see them struttin' about the streets just like yo' No'thehn college freshmen. Well, suh, those boys ah gettin' bettah schoolin' than Ah evah had."

"And what do you do for them after they get out?"

"Some of them go No'th, and you caih foh them in yo' slums. Some come back to the plantation. Ah've got one of them on mah place. Mighty smart niggah. He comes to me one day, and he says, 'Cohnel Mahshall, Ah'm tryin' hahd to save a little money, but the hahdah Ah wohks, the deepah Ah gets.' 'Well Sam,' Ah says, 'you cain't save any money if you buy of me: Ah'll lend you twenty-five dollahs, and you buy in

town. When you've saved enough money to buy a span of mules, Ah'll give you a piece of land to wohk on shaihs.' Well, suh, that niggah is wo'th three thousand dollahs today."

"But suppose your system fell into the hands of another kind of man?" I queried.

"You ah dead right theah," asserted Mr. Marshall. "A lot of No'thehn men ah comin' down heah and takin' plantations to manage. They take ou' system, sell to the nigroes on credit and make them wohk it out. If a niggah gets old or sick, they kick him out, same as you do in the factories. That's the real nigro problem. Ah reckon the state has got to step in and look aftah the nigroes, though Ah don't go much on gov'ment."

"Mr. Marshall," I said, "I'm all at sea. You've shaken most of my notions on the race question. There is just one thing I'm still sure of. You do lynch negroes, and sometimes on trivial charges, and with no evidence."

"We do," admitted Mr. Marshall, "and it's a disgrace to the South. Ah've nevah believed it does any good. Have the right kind of laws, and enfohce them. If a niggah is known to be a bad niggah, don't wait foh him to commit a crime: shut him up. Then we wouldn't have any trouble. But Ah don't think the No'th has any stones to throw at us down heah."

“Still, we never lynch negroes.”

“No. But you do buhn up yo’ factory people. Sometimes you buhn up mo’ factory people in one day—white puhsons, young gihls, ve’y likely—than we buhn niggahs in a whole yeah.”

“There is a difference between accident and intention,” I urged.

“Accident?” demanded Mr. Marshall with energy. “Yo’ own No’thehn papahs say it’s because you won’t spend the money to keep yo’ premises safe. Ah cain’t see it’s any wohse to buhn nigroes in the belief that you ah defendin’ yo’ homes than to buhn up white gihls to save a little money. Mind, Ah’m not endohsin’ lynchin’. But Ah don’t think the No’th has any stones to throw. No, suh!”

I dropped the discussion. Evidently, you can safely argue the race problem in Texas, if you will allow yourself to be worsted. Mr. Marshall thought he saw the truth. And in a way, he did, but, as any Northerner will observe, not in its just proportions.

CHAPTER V

THE SAN JUAN OBISPO

THE following morning I boarded a street car bound for Asuncion University. The main University building occupies the centre of a little plateau with steep slopes covered sparsely with stunted post-oak trees. Here and there a level terrace had been cut in the slopes, to give footing to a bungalow or a miniature colonial house—professors' residences, no doubt. From the gravelled path around the main building the horizon appears a complete circle of hills. The general effect of the landscape, under the bright morning sun of Texas, is that of a huge silver bowl with the campus embossed in the centre and with white streets and roadways chased irregularly around the sides.

The main University building covers much ground, and is of unprepossessing exterior. Your respect for Texas architecture increases, however, when you pass through the arched portico into a dim hall that leads you straight to an inner court open to the sky. In the centre is a shaggy palm tree, striving toward the square of blue above the building. An arcade, paved with gray flags, leads you around the patio to a door

of oak and leaded glass, with a sign "Offices of Administration."

In the Administration waiting-room I found a suave secretary who took my card and informed me that the President was occupied, but would soon be ready to receive me. I seated myself and surveyed the lithographs on the wall: the governors of Texas, I inferred. Houston, Lamar, Pease, Ireland, Hogg, Lanham; these I had heard of, at any rate. Their faces afforded a legible record of the changes that Texas had undergone, from the harsh but hopeful days of the Republic to the smug prosperity of the present.

The suave young man removed a telephone receiver from its hook, listened a moment, and then requested me to follow him to the President's private office. It was a magnificently tall gentleman who rose to receive me as I entered. My five-feet-ten had to tilt backward in order to meet him face to face. The tailor's attempts to triangulate his eminences had not been very successful. His face was formidable with its black brows, deep eyes, and beard pointing itself without aid of barber's skill.

"I am glad to welcome you to our fellowship, Professor Gresham," he said in a resonant voice. "I had not expected you so early."

"It was impossible for me to resist the seductions

of Texas and the San Juan Obispo. The latter, alas, I find to be a mythical stream."

"Not at all," declared the President. "You saw it below the town. After a while we'll drive out and run up the river in a launch. Where are you lodging?"

"At the University Hotel."

"Why shouldst thou not take thine ease in thine own inn?" The President's eyes twinkled.

"Mr. Marshall has told me something about the hotel," I said. "It gives me some concern."

"So it does the rest of us. Do you smoke, Professor Gresham?" He handed me a box of long cigars wrapped in tin-foil.

"Try one, and if it isn't good, throw it away and take another."

I glanced at the President's face in surprise.

"They are Mexican," explained the President. "They are like Mexico and all her works. The best in the world, or bad beyond belief. You never can judge anything Mexican until you taste it."

My cigar proved to be one of the best in the world. "A cigar like this," I exclaimed, "is a sufficient contribution to civilisation for any nation."

The President nodded. "But wait till you get one of the bad ones.—Suppose we drive down to the river, now? We can talk things over better, there." He put on his hat, a high Panama cone, under whose brim

his face looked like that of a fine old conquistador in one of his affable moments.

As we drove through the campus gate the President expounded to me the structure of the river. A vast intrusion of trap rock, too hard for the water to cut away, lay across the river-bed like a dam, forming a lake above the town. Our road, hard and white and glaring, soon left the town and crossed a dry plain, covered with mesquite trees and yellow flowered cactus four or five feet high. After we had driven about a mile we dropped off the high plain and followed a dry water-course. Here was shade in plenty: pecans and live oaks, with occasional cypresses that threatened to exclude the daylight altogether. We emerged at length at the identical stuccoed boathouse which had helped to draw me to Texas. But there were no youths and maidens canoeing on the pool. A negro fisherman in a flat-bottomed boat held undisturbed monopoly of the river.

We walked about the landing while two Mexicans drew in a launch anchored at some distance from the bank. There were flowers everywhere; most of them with sweet and strange scents. They are as yet too new to our race to have been properly christened; for the present, they are forced to submit to hideous scientific names, that nobody, fortunately, can remember. President Brett apparently knew scores of those

names, but he confessed that they were hopelessly jumbled in his memory.

Our launch was at the bank, and soon we were gliding over the clearest water I had ever seen. Down in the bottom, fathoms and fathoms below us, the water plants stood upright, for all the world like sturdy trees on land. Multitudes of tiny turtles floated among their branches, and occasionally a fish, white and gleaming, shot out from under their shadows. Our passage raised up from the water a soft and dreamy breeze. Surely the San Juan Obispo was worth coming far to see.

“Lilies?” I inquired, as our launch laboured to make its way through an aquatic garden.

“Water hyacinths,” said the President. “A terrible pest.”

“But a beautiful one.”

“All pests are beautiful in Texas.—But now suppose we talk about the University. Have a Mexican?”

I lit the cigar. What a disagreeable pungency!

“Throw it away,” commanded the President. “It has the aroma of carnage.”

I obeyed with alacrity.

“Since you have talked with Mr. Marshall,” began the President. “I suppose you will want to know something about our finances.”

“Yes.”

“ We have an endowment of a million and a half in the hotel. That yields nothing. We have a hundred thousand acres of land in West Texas. They yield nothing.” The President paused. “ We have no other endowment.”

“ Then what do we live on? ” I demanded.

“ For a while we lived on next to nothing. The professors gave their services for love of the work, and lack of other employment.”

“ And now? ” My interest was thoroughly aroused.

“ Now we have a generous patron who makes up our annual deficits.”

This was disillusioning. “ How am I to reconcile this state of affairs with the tone of your letter, Mr. President? ”

“ I signed that letter. But the form was devised by my honoured predecessor, before the University Hotel shattered our hopes.”

“ Don't you think it needs revision? ”

“ Yes, I have thought so. But the trustees will not permit it. And besides, we have new hopes. The generous patron who covers our deficits makes frequent occasion to speak of his will.”

That was some comfort, anyway. And if the University was a disappointment to me, I could console myself with the thought that I was likely to prove a disappointment to it.

“What you have just said, Mr. President, gives me courage to make a confession. I am not qualified to give all those courses offered by my predecessor.”

“Neither was he.”

“Still, he was able to retire with the universal regret of the University.”

“With its universal regret,” repeated the President. “And at my request.”

“What!” I cried, aghast. “Do you mean that you fired him?”

“I wouldn’t put it in that way,” replied the President deprecatingly. “He resigned, under a trifle of pressure.”

This was discouraging. “If you fired such a learned man as Professor Williams, what are you likely to do to me?”

“I didn’t fire him for his learning. I fired him because his doctrines were unsound.”

“Good Heavens!” I exclaimed. “Will you please tell me what you mean by unsound doctrines?”

“I have no way of determining the question except through the test of experience. If a doctrine leads to a professor’s retirement, it is unsound.”

“You bewilder me, Mr. President. You cut off a man’s head, and then inquire why you did it.”

“Yes. I am, however, only the executioner. The prosecution is conducted by our generous patron.”

“I shall return to New York at once!” I exclaimed.
“My resignation is in your hands.”

“Very well. I shall keep it for future use, if necessary. If I were you, however, I should not be in a hurry to depart. Wait a while and see.”

“And permit a generous patron of the University to deprive me of my freedom of thought?”

“You are free to think whatever you like. And to teach anything you like. I have already told our patron what a young scholar from Harvard would be likely to teach. He says he can’t see how it would do much harm.”

I was speechless with indignation.

“You can now see why I brought you out in a boat to discuss University affairs,” remarked the President quietly. “You can’t get away before you have had time to cool off. Observe the fragrance of this flower.” And he plucked from the overhanging bank an exquisite soft little sphere of heliotrope colour, with the sweetest odour imaginable. He pronounced a polysyllabic name that would have disgraced a toadstool.

“It will broaden your experience to sojourn with us. For example, you have never before met a man like me?”

“I never have. You look to me like one of the finest men I ever saw, and yet you continue to hold the presidency of this institution.”

“You are a man of acumen,” said the President judicially. Perhaps this was an additional insult, I said to myself. None the less, it was impossible to keep my indignation from slipping away.

The President’s face assumed a dreamy expression. “When you have lived in Texas for a few months, you will lose much of your Northern impatience. You will feel that academic liberty is not to be achieved in a day or a year, but that centuries will be required to establish it. And you will feel that there are centuries enough for the work.”

“Perhaps I shall. At present I feel that we should follow the example of the trades unions: walk out in a body when our liberties are threatened.”

“You are young. You have, presumably, no one dependent upon you. Therefore you can follow the example of the trades unionists, if you like. The rest of us are not so young, and we should find your plan disastrous. Where should I pick up again this pleasant title of university president?”

I watched the President’s face with growing perplexity. Its expression was inscrutable.

“I don’t believe you care for the title one whit,” I asserted. “It does not add an inch to your stature.”

“No. In my opinion it cuts off several inches. But as any one can see, I am much too tall.”

“What I can’t possibly comprehend is how a man like you should hold personal liberty in contempt.”

“I don’t. The only kind of liberty I’ve spoken of is academic liberty.”

“What is the distinction, Mr. President?”

“The man who is personally free does what he thinks is right and is ready to meet the consequences. The man who is academically free does what he thinks is right, and refuses to meet any consequences at all.”

“The distinction is subtle. Tell me, how does it apply in my case?”

“You will teach what you believe to be right. If your teaching produces a crisis, you will shoulder all the consequences yourself, and not expect other men to place their positions in jeopardy on your account.”

“Agreed. Now tell me, what was it that destroyed my predecessor?”

“In the first place, he believed that all men are created equal.”

“So do I—in a sense.”

“In what sense?”

“A legal sense.”

“That is no sense at all. But it won’t prejudice your interests if you hold to such a doctrine. In the second place, he believed in the doctrine of evolution.”

“So do I—in a sense.”

“And in a sense, you don’t believe in it? That is

entirely safe to say. In the third place, he believed in Socialism."

"Meaning what?"

"That also is a safe position to take."

"I haven't taken any position."

"Very wise," laughed the President. "Don't let us waste more time on these minor matters. Teach what you please. I trust you will outlive our patron, but whatever happens we'll remain good friends."

The President leaned back in his seat and lit a cigar. Then he told a story, and another, and another. Good stories they were, of South and West and North. At last our launch carried us to the stuccoed boathouse. Academic liberty? It does not seem anything that greatly matters on the San Juan Obispo.

"You'll want to meet our patron," said the President, as we parted at the university gate. "We have a little club which meets tonight at the University Hotel. It's called the Utriusque Club. Our patron will no doubt be there. I'll call for you at your room."

I had dreamed of the philanthropic cyclops that devours occasional professors and keeps on hand large supplies of them, in tether. I should now meet one face to face.

CHAPTER VI

THE UTRIUSQUE CLUB

INQUIRIES at the hotel produced the information that the Utriusque Club was a dining club, meeting at half-past seven in the open air dining-room on the roof. I retired to my room and pondered upon the question of the attire appropriate to such an event. Was it formal or informal? And what did those terms mean in Texas? In the midst of my fruitless speculations I heard a vigorous rap at my door. I opened it and found Mr. Marshall.

“Come in!” I cried, overjoyed. “You are just in time to rescue me from infinite perplexities. What do men wear at social affairs, at this time of year?”

“This is Texas,” replied Mr. Marshall cheerfully, seating himself and lighting a cigar. “You weah anything you please. Do anything you please.”

“What a relief!” I exclaimed.

“If you’ll pahdon me foh sayin’ it, Ah don’t reckon you’ve got anything fit to weah in summah weathah. Ah’d die if Ah had to weah the clo’es you’ve got on.”

“What would you recommend?”

“Suit of handkerchief linen.—But Ah came in to see if you don’t want to go to a club dinnah with me

tonight. The club meets right heah: we call it the Utriusque Club."

"I'd surely like to go with you. But President Brett has invited me to go there as his guest."

"Mighty lucky Ah happened in, then. President Brett always fohgets to come to that club. Theh's usually one or mo' of his guests hangin' round waitin' foh him."

"Rather embarrassing," I remarked, somewhat disillusioned with my fine conquistador.

"Oh, we always send out the seahgeant-at-ahms to round them up, and we try to make it pleasant foh them."

"What is this Utriusque Club, anyway?" I inquired, drawing my chair up to face Mr. Marshall.

"It's a kind of a lit'ry club, half college professohs, half from the town. That's what the name means."

"Oh! It didn't mean anything to me."

"Didn't it? Well, maybe it don't mean anything. The name used to be a mile long. The old professoh of Latin up at the college composed it. When he died, nobody could translate it, so we dropped ev'ything but the last wohds. Does just as well."

"Another thing I want to know is the name of the man who makes up the college deficits. President Brett said I'd meet him there."

“Oh, that must be Mr. Allen, the money lender. You owe him yo’ chaih, suh.” Mr. Marshall’s eyes twinkled.

“Something I didn’t realise.”

“Oh, yes, suh. Mr. Allen heahd some of yo’ predecessoh’s lectuahs. He didn’t like them, so he had them dischahge yo’ predecessoh, suh, and made a place foh you.”

“How long do you suppose I’ll last?” I inquired.

“Well, Ah reckon he won’t have you dischahged foh a yeah, suh. He’s not so impatient as Mr. Rodney Jackson was. In Mr. Rodney Jackson’s day it nevah paid a professoh to unpack his trunk, suh.”

“A cheerful prospect for me, Mr. Marshall.”

“You cain’t tell,” laughed Mr. Marshall. “He may take to you. Ah advise you to put yo’ best foot foh-wahd, tonight. Make a good impression.”

“How do you do it?”

“Oh, Ah don’t know.—Let us go on up. Best paht of the programme comes befo’ the dinnah.”

“What do you do?”

“We have something to drink, if we ah thirsty, and sit around and heah Judge Thorpe tell about old times in Texas. Mighty int’reesting.”

“And after dinner?”

“Some membah reads a ve’y leahned papah. Ah always get out. But you’ll enjoy it.”

“I’m not so sure. But I want to hear the stories. Let us go up.”

The dining-room was open to the sky, save for big, steel rafters overhead from which glass sashes were suspended, to roof the room over in time of storm. Under a cut-glass chandelier a number of men were seated around a table listening to the animated narratives of a person, youthful in manner, who proved, on close inspection, to be very aged. “Judge Thorpe,” said Mr. Marshall, as we joined the group.

“Old Sam was a remarkable campaignah,” said Judge Thorpe. “Yes, suh, a remarkable campaignah.”

“He’s talkin’ about Sam Houston,” explained Mr. Marshall in a low voice.

“The last time I heahd him was up at Austin,” continued Judge Thorpe. “Now, you know, old Sam always disliked puhsonal encountahs. Well, theh was a man back in the crowd thought he’d pick a quarrel. So he sang out to Sam, ‘You ah lyin’!’ Sam heahd him all right, but pretended he didn’t. So the fellow yelled anothah time, ‘You ah lyin’!’ Sam didn’t want to pay any attention to him, but the crowd was gettin’ interested. So Sam shouts, ‘And who ah you?’ ‘Mah name is Smith,’ says the man. ‘Which Smith?’ ‘Bill Smith.’ ‘Ah yes,’ says Sam to the crowd. ‘My friend Bob Smith warned me he had a crazy brothah Bill, down here in Austin, was like to make me trouble.’”

It is the inanities of great men that really count. Their wise sayings are usually sophisticated, their foolish ones alone have the stamp of authenticity. I listened a half an hour to Judge Thorpe; and Houston and Austin, Bowie and Crockett had descended from the Homeric mists, which time and Texan romance have thrown over them, and had become as real as the merchants and lawyers of Main Street.

“Heah comes yo’ patron,” said Mr. Marshall, nodding toward the door. He was a corpulent person, leaning upon a twisted black stick. The lights overhead made his eyes water and drew up his purple face in a fierce scowl.

“Let me introduce you, suh,” said Mr. Marshall. “Mr. Allen, allow me to present Mr. Gresham, who has come down to take the chaih in philosophy at the University.”

Mr. Allen inspected me crossly. “Why did you come at this time of year, sir? You have nothing to do for three months, sir.”

“I have come to get acclimated, Mr. Allen.”

“Absurd idea, sir. You’ll get full of malaria, and be absolutely unfitted to perform your work.”

“I intend to shut myself up at night, without a chink for a mosquito to get through.”

“So you accept that ridiculous mosquito theory of malaria? There’s nothing in it, and I’ll tell you why.”

“Beg pahdon, gentlemen, foh interruptin’ yo con-vehsation,” said Mr. Marshall politely, “I want Mr. Gresham to meet mah friend Professoh Fredericks.” He put his hand on my shoulder and hurried me away, to the manifest bitter disgust of Mr. Allen.

“I’m afraid I didn’t get my best foot forward,” I remarked ruefully.

“Nevah mind. He’d have bit it off. Nevah saw him mo’ set on a quarrel.”

Mr. Marshall introduced me to Professor Fredericks and left us, he said, “to enjoy each othah’s leahned society.” Professor Fredericks was a worn and suspicious person, who seemed undecided whether his ideas were too abstruse for me or not abstruse enough. He was pathetically eager to get me off his hands, and succeeded in foisting me upon a tall, legal gentleman with long, severe profile and pleasant blue eyes, by the name of Mr. Dabney Arbuthnot. Mr. Arbuthnot turned a friendly face upon me, and we were both trying unsuccessfully to find something to say when the host of the evening tapped his bell.

“That means for us to sit,” said Mr. Arbuthnot. “Suppose we find places near the door so that we can slip away if the paper is very bad.”

We seated ourselves at the end of the table near the door. As the dinner proceeded I stole occasional glances at Mr. Allen, at the other end of the table.

He was eating voraciously and his brow was becoming smooth.

“He doesn’t look so bloodthirsty now,” I remarked.

“Who?” asked Mr. Arbuthnot.

“Mr. Allen. He nearly devoured me before dinner.”

“Keep away from Mr. Allen when he’s hungry. That’s so, you’re a stranger. Who let him loose on you?”

“Mr. Marshall.”

“Marshall is a pretty good fellow, but his sense of humour is of a low order. I should class that with infernal practical joking. You want to watch him.”

The host again tapped his bell, and the speaker of the evening rose. It was Judge Thorpe.

“This is fine!” I exclaimed enthusiastically. “I’ll hear some more of the truth about the heroes of Texas.”

“We’ll wait and see,” said Mr. Arbuthnot judicially. His doubts were well founded, for the judge apparently scorned to continue, in a formal way, his reminiscences of early Texas history. What he had set for himself was the task of proving that the Aztecs and the Toltecs were the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel.

“You will note, gentlemen, the figure I draw in the aih. It is the Hebrew charactah Ayin. If evah you visit the ruins at Tlactatl, you will obsehve that the mound on the east hill beahs practically the identical fohm.

“And what is still mo’ remahkable is the frequent appearance of a hieroglyphic almost identical in fohm with the Hebrew charactah Gimel. As you well know, the Hebrew charactah is a crude pictuah of a camel. Now, wheh did the Aztecs or the Toltecs get this charactah? Theh nevah wuh any camels on this continent.”

“Professor Gresham,” said Mr. Arbuthnot, in a low voice, wrinkling his brows doubtfully, “what do you think of this argument?”

“Dreadful rubbish.”

“In a moment we’ll get away. Say! I believe a storm is coming.”

A fierce gust of wind whipped out the lights on the table; another, still fiercer, knocked the candles over on the cloth. The hotel servants rushed about jerking at pulley cords that shot the glass sashes across the open spaces overhead. Hardly were we roofed in when a flash of lightning dimmed the incandescent burners to thin red strings, and the thunder broke upon us with a crash that seemed to shake the whole building. Another crash followed, and then a great downpour of rain, battering at the glass overhead.

“This can’t last long!” shouted Mr. Arbuthnot in my ear. “Suppose we get away before Judge Thorpe can make another start.”

We made for the elevator, and in a few minutes were

comfortably established in my room, finishing our cigars.

“The only thing I regret,” I remarked, “is that I did not get a chance to make my peace with that old alligator who swallowed my predecessor.”

Mr. Arbuthnot smiled gently. “You know, Mr. Gresham, we Southern people are all more or less related. ‘That old alligator’ happens to be my father-in-law.”

“Good Heavens!” I exclaimed in consternation. “And I pride myself on being a man of tact!”

“It doesn’t matter. Mr. Allen owns half this town, I reckon. But he don’t own me. Professor—Do you prefer to have me call you Professor, or just Mister?”

“Mister,” I said, “or better still, Gresham.”

“My own official style,” and Mr. Arbuthnot assumed a legal intonation, “is Dabney Arbuthnot, Esquire. My acquaintances usually call me Arbuthnot. And my particularly intimate friends call me Doby.”

“Doby?” I repeated.

“I once had a little brother,” said Mr. Arbuthnot, dropping his legal tone. “It ’most killed me when he died. Well, the little fellow couldn’t speak very plain. Doby, he called me, meaning, of course, Dabney. I stick to that name. It’s about all that’s left of Billy. Sweetest little fellow you ever saw. I’ll have it put

on my tombstone. Reckon you think I'm a good deal of a sentimentalist?"

"No," I said. "Doby—I like the name. Are you going to let me call you Doby?"

"I'd love to have you." Mr. Arbuthnot smiled. "Gresham, you are now enrolled among my most intimate friends." He offered me his hand.

"I reckon the rain has stopped," he said, stepping to the window and thrusting his hand out into the darkness. "What do you say to going down to Pergolino's Garden? Mighty interesting place, sometimes. Have you been there yet?"

"No, I've never heard of it."

"Come on, then. No, you don't need an umbrella. It won't rain again for months."

CHAPTER VII

TRAINING A PROFESSOR

THE sky was all starry again when we issued upon the street, and the upper stories of the hotel appeared white and glistening in the light of the rising moon. Underfoot the evidences of the storm were abundant. Empty barrels, bales of hay, grocery boxes and miscellaneous rubbish were stranded on the sidewalk: the street must have been a river a few minutes earlier. A block away a string of trolley cars were clanging impatiently at a group of workmen under an arc light, who were trying to remove from the track an overturned van.

“I reckon we’ll have to walk,” said Doby. “It ain’t far, only eight or ten blocks. We need a little fresh night air after that paper.”

The sultriness of the early evening had been swept away by the rain, and there was a quality in the air that made it seem like a great lark to cross and recross the slippery pavement in search of sound footing on the sidewalks; to jump over supposed pools of water that proved to be only glistening concrete, and to wade through real pools whose existence you didn’t suspect until you were over your shoe tops. The last

vestiges of professional dignity had been dissolved out of Doby's steps, and he was dancing like a boy when we halted before a long wall of brick with just one opening on the street—a broad gate with the sign "Pergolino's Garden" arching over it in letters of gold.

Pergolino's Garden is a parallelogram of low, flat-roofed buildings enclosing a paved court, in the centre of which is an enormous fig tree with foliage thick enough to keep the court in a sort of greenish twilight in the brightest day. To your right as you enter you see a high fence of heavy wire net, from behind which you always hear howls and yelps and shrieks. Pergolino keeps a menagerie, according to Doby's explanation, as a substitute for an orchestra. It is cheaper to maintain, and more harmonious, since the musicians' union attempted to gain a footing in Asuncion. The building at the farther end of the court is a spacious pavilion, standing out over the river. This night the tables usually spread under the fig tree had been removed to the shelter of the eaves, and the guests were assembled in the pavilion. Doby and I ran across the court through a shower of big drops from the fig tree and established ourselves at a table on the river side of the pavilion. There was a sound of falling waters below us which seemed to have lulled most of the guests to a doze. Two waiters in white circulated about, picking up scanty orders for meat and drink.

“What will you have, Gresham?” asked Doby in a tone of cordial invitation.

“Do you suppose they have vichy here?” I asked with some hesitation.

“Thunder, yes,” growled Doby. “I don’t know why they keep it, but they do. You must excuse me, Gresham, but I have strong opinions on the subject of drinks.”

It was a pretty feeble joke, but it seemed irresistibly funny to me just then, for the night air was very intoxicating.

I got the vichy, nevertheless, at the cost, I observed, of the waiter’s contempt.

But now the guests began to grow animated. A girl in a red silk dress was flitting about from table to table, stopping to chat here, contenting herself with a word there.

“Pergolino’s daughter,” said Doby. “The most impudent little devil you ever saw. She’ll call on us before she’s through.”

Pergolino’s daughter presently tripped up to our table and nodded to Doby. Then she proceeded to an inventory of me. She was disquietingly beautiful: so much I ascertained before my embarrassment became so intense as to rob me of my powers of observation. She was of light bronze colour, and had eyes so dark that you could not tell where the pupils were, only you

were morally certain they were fixed upon whatever you might consider your most significant defect of countenance.

“What is that you are drinking?” she inquired.

My heart sank. “It’s vichy,” I replied with humility.

“Vichy? Vichy? What is that? Let me taste it.”

I offered my glass. She took a sip through a straw, and threw the contents of the glass into the river below.

“See here, young woman,” said Doby sternly. “I do not permit my friends to be insulted. You go and get another glass for him, and make your apologies.”

“My father does not permit me to serve drinks,” she said with a tone of finality.

“All right. I’ll have him serve them,” said Doby, rising.

“Don’t let us make all this fuss about a glass of vichy,” I remonstrated.

“It isn’t the vichy,” said Doby with determination. “It’s the principle.”

“The gentleman shall have his vichy,” said the girl coolly, beckoning to a waiter. “I have not seen the gentleman before.”

“His name is Mr. Gresham,” said Doby, quite mollified now. “He is a professor up at the college.”

“We have a professor here,” said the girl, moving away. “You shall see him.”

Presently there appeared on a raised platform at one end of the pavilion a shaggy, browless Mexican with a cringing, spotted dog.

“That’s the professor,” said Doby.

“That Mexican?”

“No, the dog. They call him Professor Sciarli. He’s a wonderful dog, too. You ought to give him a degree up at the college.”

The Mexican uttered a few words of canine quality and threw what appeared to be a carving knife into the air. The dog leaped at it as it came down, caught the handle in his teeth and faced the guests, wagging his tail. The Mexican took the knife away from him, held a pair of sheep shears before the dog’s eyes, and uttered more canine words.

“They’re training the dog,” said Doby. “Pergolino entertains his guests by letting them see the animals trained. When they are sufficiently accomplished, he sells them to a circus company.”

“Is that Mexican Pergolino?”

“Oh no. That’s just a cheap animal trainer who lives on what the guests give him. Pergolino’s not a Mexican. He’s a Dago or a Portuguese.”

The Mexican threw up the shears. Professor Sciarli jumped at them, but dodged and let them fall to the floor with a clatter. The Mexican struck the dog with a little whip, and the poor beast yelped piteously.

The performance was repeated, another failure, another blow, and piteous yelping. After half a dozen attempts the dog succeeded in catching the shears and trotted to the front of the platform, wagging his tail. The guests applauded and the Mexican descended from the platform, followed by Professor Sciarli, and went from table to table, collecting small coins. He stopped before our table while I searched in my pocket for an appropriate coin. Pergolino's daughter ran up, snatched the whip away from the Mexican and gave the dog a sharp cut across the head. At this unprovoked assault the poor beast set up a most doleful wail.

"Shame on you, Elena," said Doby angrily. "What did the poor dog do?"

"It is good for the professor to be whipped," said the girl calmly. "It is the only way he will ever learn anything. Waiter!" she called. "Bring this professor some more vichy." And she was gone.

"Mighty impudent little devil," growled Doby, suppressing a chuckle.

The waterfall below began to roar. "Must have been a cloudburst above town," said Doby. We walked to the railing and looked out upon the river. The little waterfall had been transformed into a huge, foaming cataract, roaring like Niagara. The spray ascended and began to float over the garden. Now the electric

lights were enclosed in half-opaque globes of mist. The guests were departing.

“We’ll get soaked,” said Doby. “Let’s go back to the hotel.”

“Gresham,” said Doby, as we parted in the hotel lobby, “I want to make you acquainted with Lucile and the baby. Tomorrow is Sunday. I’ll call for you and take you home for dinner.”

“Thank you, Doby.”

“You may find the old alligator there,” continued Doby. “But Lucile has him pretty well in hand. Besides, she knows just how to feed him.”

CHAPTER VIII

THE ALLIGATOR'S DAUGHTER

DOBY had his own ideas of living, he explained to me as we drove up San Jacinto Street toward the hills beyond the town. No two-by-four town lot for him, with terraced lawn and ornamental shrubs. He was born in the country, and he had to have the country around him. That was natural; what was amazing was that Lucile, who had been brought up in the social heart of Baltimore, quite agreed with him. And so they had bought a little old plantation, three miles from the centre of town, and had built a beautiful house, after plans designed by Lucile.

Lucile, I gathered from Doby, was a very wonderful person. Her beauty was remarkable, and her wit furnished Doby with an endless stock of quotations, after each one of which came an explanation that this was badly garbled, owing to faulty memory, and that originally it was much more telling. That she was indeed wonderful seemed to me perfectly obvious, in view of the fact that she was reported to have her crusty old father in complete control. She had uprooted him, property and all, and brought him with her to Asuncion.

One could only admire her for her achievement, however ill-advised the undertaking might seem to be.

Most wonderful after Lucile, as I learned before we reached the house, was the baby, occasionally known as Catharine. I did not inquire about the baby's age, but I inferred that it lay between six and ten. Even assuming the latter age, she was clearly a marvel of precocity, unless Doby added as much to the cleverness of her sayings as he alleged that he subtracted from those of Lucile. I like children, and I felt sure old Allen's blood would be sufficiently diluted in Catharine so that I could make friends with her. As for Lucile, I had my doubts; but I'd soon have them resolved, as we were now driving down a gravelly lane with the house, huge and grey, looming up among the pecan trees. We crossed a quaking bridge of plank, over a little stream that flowed past one flank of the house, and into a courtyard overcrowded with big rosebushes, now showing only a scattering of buds baked too hard by the sun ever to pass into the stage of flowers.

As an architect Lucile had certainly displayed originality. The façade was all columns supporting three galleries, one above the other. The columns, of light grey cement, were about twice as thick as architectural rules would prescribe, and there were three times as many as were needed. The terraces of bulky grey stone columns made the house look like Nebuchad-

nezzar's Hanging Gardens, and the resemblance was heightened by innumerable potted plants fringing the successive cornices with their cobwebby vines. The living-room was a vast vaulted hall, with walls tapestried in rich browns and buffs and yellows. Lucile's taste ran in the direction of exuberance. Of this one had additional evidence in the furniture, which on first inspection seemed to encumber the room excessively, but which closer examination showed was designed to subdivide the room into sheltered nooks where groups of guests might be separately disposed, each selected according to its prevailing character. Doby and I buried ourselves in the depths of a colossal settee before a row of open windows looking out over the stream.

We waited, it seemed to me, an hour. From time to time Doby would rise and look over the back of the settee. "Lucile has so many matters to attend to," he explained. "She told me to bring you at one. But it's a big job to run a house like this."

There was a light step on the floor behind us, and Doby and I rose. Lucile at last. She was a girlish person, apparently twenty-five, very pink and white and smiling. "Behold the alligator's daughter, just fresh from her green pool," she cried gaily, offering me her hand.

"I have been betrayed," I said gloomily. "Now I shall not be able to find a single word to say."

“It doesn’t matter,” said Lucile reassuringly. “Doby says I talk so much my guests can’t get in a single word. Let this be a warning to you: never trust Doby. He tells me everything he knows. Oh, I know the most awful things about every man in town!”

“Lucile,” expostulated Doby, “you are giving Mr. Gresham a wholly erroneous impression of my discretion.”

“I’ll prove it!” cried Lucile. “Is there anybody in town you’d like particularly to have slandered, Mr. Gresham?”

“The only person I have a grudge against is Mr. Marshall,” I said. “If I could have something to hold over him——”

“You shall have it!” said Lucile. “Which shall I tell, Doby, that affair on the river or——”

“Hush, Lucile,” said Doby sternly. “Mr. Gresham will think we’re nothing but gossips. Here comes Catharine.”

I turned to greet the baby. What! A young woman, taller than Lucile, whom she greatly resembled; pink and white and smiling, just like her mother, with an underlying gravity that probably cloaked unlimited mischief.

“Catharine?” I inquired in astonishment. “The baby?”

“You must understand, Mr. Gresham,” said Catharine gravely, “Father and Mother are still children, and so they have to consider me a baby.”

“Isn’t this huge girl a terrible disgrace to a person who tries so hard to look young as I do?” inquired Lucile tragically. “Catharine wanted to make her appearance an hour ago. I positively forbade her. I didn’t want you to think of me first as Granny Arbuthnot.”

“Lucile was very young when we were married,” explained Doby.

“Not so very young,” said Catharine inexorably. “Mamma, if ever you pass me off for a baby again, I’ll tell just how old you are.”

“Dreadful, unnatural child!” exclaimed Lucile. “Just wait: a time will come when you’ll want to appear young, and then I’ll come out of my chimney corner and inform on you. ’Deed I will.”

Doby coughed. “I think I hear Father coming.”

“Catharine, take Mr. Gresham into the library,” ordered Lucile. “And don’t dare to return till Father has had time to finish his soup. I’ll send Josie for you.”

“I suppose you are very fond of books,” said Catharine when we had made our escape.

“No,” I replied. “Are you?”

“Of course not,” said Catharine emphatically. “No-

body is. I don't know why I asked you such a foolish question."

"You were trying to make conversation, and so am I, but we won't succeed. I am very bashful and you are very young. Suppose you just sit down, Catharine, and let me look at you. You are very fair to look upon."

"That doesn't sound very bashful," said Catharine soberly.

"Remember," I said, "all the speeches I made up for you were for a baby. I'm totally unprepared for the present emergency."

"All my speeches were prepared for a very learned philosopher," retorted Catharine. "I suspect you are just as much philosopher as I am baby."

"Dinnah am sehved, Miss Catharine," said a black apparition in the doorway.

"Has Grandfather eaten his soup?" inquired Catharine cautiously.

"Yes, Miss Catharine. Yo' mothah is pow'ful exercised because you haven't appeahed."

"Come, Mr. Gresham, we'll appear. Grandfather's edge is off."

Lucile scolded us for our tardiness, and Mr. Allen, not yet adequately appeased, was obviously prepared to enforce her remarks by more vigorous ones. He got no opportunity, however, for Lucile quickly ran over

into another subject. The dinner proceeded, and Mr. Allen's apoplectic face little by little grew as smooth as a baby's.

"This is Grandfather's favourite salad," remarked Catharine innocently, as Lucile paused for food. "It is alligator pear."

"O Catharine; you are just dreadful," cried Lucile with a burst of laughter. Catharine's gravity gave way to the infection, while Doby and I tried our best to look mystified.

"What is the joke, pray?" inquired Mr. Allen suspiciously, his face wrinkling again. "Will you tell me, sir," and he scowled at me, "what this most exquisite joke may be?"

"I haven't the least idea, sir," I replied in consternation.

"Catharine, you seem to have recovered sufficiently to speak intelligently," said Mr. Allen, his face growing purple. "Let us all share in the enjoyment of this joke."

"Grandfather," said Catharine bravely, "you never could see the point of this joke. It's like some of your own jokes: Mother and I can't see the point, however much you explain."

The old man rose from his seat. "I'll not sit here and be made sport of by a little whippersnapper of a professor who gets his salary out of an institution I keep

out of bankruptcy." And he glared at me venomously.

"Truly, Grandfather, Mr. Gresham doesn't see the point any more than you do," asserted Catharine.

Mr. Allen made no reply, but looked around for his stick, hobbled after it and set out for the door. Lucile and Catharine hurried after him, imploring him to come back, but he was inexorable.

"I suppose I'd better buy my ticket for New York," I remarked as Lucile and Catharine returned to the table.

"Nonsense!" said Lucile. "Catharine and I won't let him touch you."

"No, indeed!" said Catharine. "It was all my fault. If you all would stop trying to make a baby of me, I'd stop doing such foolish things."

"You're entirely safe, Gresham," said Doby reassuringly. "Mr. Allen will never forgive you, but he won't dare to touch you so long as Lucile and Catharine stand by you."

"But if ever your protection is withdrawn, out I go?"

"Of course," said Lucile. "You are to live just by our grace. And so we are going to boss you just as much as we please. Won't that be lovely, Catharine?"

"Something new in the way of academic freedom," said Doby mischievously.

“Academic freedom!” exclaimed Lucile. “There isn’t any such thing. No professor ever dares to say what he thinks, and you know it, Doby. Besides, if anybody is free, it’s Mr. Gresham. President Brett won’t dare to touch him without consulting Father, and Father won’t dare to do it without consulting us. You may teach any kind of nonsense you please.”

“May I teach evolution and Socialism?”

“Yes, indeed you may. Nobody cares a rap what you teach. All you have to do is to obey us.”

“Are many of the professors under your protection?” I inquired.

“Oh, dear no! Long, long ago, when I was very young, I tried to befriend them. But they are of that dreadful, dreadful kind of persons who think you mean what you don’t, and don’t think you mean what you do. It isn’t worth while bossing such creatures. I’ve washed my hands of them.”

“I can’t see how it’s going to pay to boss me either,” I said sadly. “You can’t make me do many things, for there are very few things I can do.”

“We can make you reform,” said Lucile. “We’ll make you abandon your evil ways.”

“I haven’t any evil ways worth abandoning,” I objected.

“Oh, what a pessimist!” exclaimed Lucile. “Doby,

do give Mr. Gresham a big cigar. Come, we'll go into the living-room. Do you sing, Mr. Gresham?"

"I am a philosopher. I can only croak."

"Hush," said Lucile. "Doby, play us something. It's high time we began to train Mr. Gresham."

CHAPTER IX

ELENA THE CHANGELESS

It was not with the express intention of wasting the summer in satisfying an idle curiosity about people and institutions that I had set out for Texas so long before the opening of the college year. Texas is full of wonders, but nobody in the North has ever heard of them. At least I had never heard of them: I had pictured Texas as simply the southern extension of the Middle West: limitless prairies, in corn and cotton, with a semi-arid belt of pasture to the west. A scholar who had read very deeply in the history of civilisation had once assured me that all true philosophies have their origin in the sub-tropical climates, where man can make a friend of Nature instead of ceaselessly warring against her. All temperate zone philosophies, he urged, are of the nature of delirium; men shake them off, after long agony, and return to the true philosophies of India and Greece. So I had come to Texas to learn true philosophy. I had carried a trunkload of false temperate zone philosophies with me, to use if the true philosophy should prove too coy.

As soon as I was well settled in my room at the University Hotel, I arranged my books and tried to read.

The attempt was vain: I had absorbed the first principle of true philosophy, namely, that there is no hurry about anything. Kant and Hume, Berkeley and Hegel, Comte and Spencer, James and Bergson have important uses for one who is summering in Texas. However hot and nervous you may be, a very few moments devoted to their pages will enable you to settle back in your chair to enjoy a dreamless state which never breaks until the delicious breeze from the Gulf flaps your awnings at sunset. You rise from your chair with a happy conviction that there are still thousands and thousands of years in which men may live and enjoy before any philosophical problems really need to be finally settled.

Thus I dozed out the afternoon of the day after Lucile and Catharine had taken me under their protection. Awaking thoroughly refreshed, I resolved to dine and then spend the evening writing to my benighted friends in the North, to advise them one and all to come to Texas. I stepped to the window and inhaled the breeze. No, indeed, the evening should not be thus wasted. I must go somewhere; and there was just one place to go: Pergolino's Garden. Doby, no doubt had gone home, but perhaps I could get Mr. Marshall to accompany me.

I found Mr. Marshall's door open. I tapped on the jamb.

“Hello,” said Mr. Marshall sleepily, rising from his chair. “Lord! Ah’ve been sleepin’ since noon.”

“So have I,” I replied. “I want to go for a walk now. Come down with me to Pergolino’s Garden. Doby says the food is fine.”

“Doby’s a dreamah. The food will do if you can live on peppah. And don’t inquiah too closely into its history. Ah’ll be glad to go with you to Pergolino’s Garden. But not foh the food.”

“I’m not going for the food, either,” I said. “I want to catch another glimpse of Pergolino’s daughter, to see if she’s really as pretty as she seems to be. I haven’t got sand enough to go alone, as she treated me very badly the last time I was there.”

“You talk like a No’tthenah, but you cain’t be one,” said Mr. Marshall approvingly. “Nobody but Texans speak the truth, but you ah gettin’ close to it. You might have stuck to the food or the aih or the animals or some othah thing that doesn’t mattah. Elena is the only reason foh goin’ to Pergolino’s Garden. When she ain’t theh the place is dead.”

As we passed through Pergolino’s gate it was growing dark, but the fig tree gleamed with a score of electric bulbs suspended from its branches. We seated ourselves at a table set against the colossal trunk, where the light filtered green through the leaves. Guests were few and the red dress nowhere in sight.

A waiter approached the table and set a glass of vichy before me.

“Who ordered this?” I demanded.

“She did,” said the waiter, nodding toward the quarter where Pergolino’s living-rooms appeared to be.

“What’s this?” asked Mr. Marshall. “You’ve made progress.”

“Not at all. It’s just an expression of contempt for my teetotalism.”

“How do you know it was contempt? Did she say so?”

“No. Couldn’t I tell from her looks?”

“No, that’s wheah you ah mistaken. Elena’s looks nevah change. Ah’ve tried to make huh smile and Ah’ve tried to make huh frown. You cain’t do it. Huh tongue is ready enough, but Ah nevah saw huh face change in the slightest.”

“You seem to know her pretty well. Who is she? And where does she get her accent? It isn’t foreign, and it isn’t Southern.”

“She gets that from huh mothah.”

“And who is her mother?”

“She was a white woman—American woman, I mean. She was said to come of a good New York family. How Pergolino got huh, Ah don’t know.”

“What kind of man is Pergolino?”

“Reg’lar old devil. Lord, how he used to beat that

po' woman! Sometimes huh screams would drive the guests away."

"Didn't any one ever interfere?"

"Yes, we once took it into ouah haid to rescue huh. We got up a pahty and broke into Pergolino's den and took the woman and child away. We put them undah the chahge of Cohnel Mill's lady. The Cohnel nevah undressed foh fo' weeks. He feahed Pergolino would try to recovah them."

"Didn't Pergolino try it?"

"No. He didn't need to. As soon as huh should-ahs healed up—she was all cut up with a whip, the Cohnel's lady says—she began to cry and moan: 'Oh Cesare, mah deah Cesare.' Foh a while we thought she was out of huh haid. But the Cohnel's lady decided the woman was just in love with that brute. So we tuhned huh loose, and she run back to him."

"And did he still beat her?"

"Mo' than evah. But we decided to keep ou' hands off. Maybe it's just a peculiah, foreign way of love-makin', you know. Ah often tell mah wife, 'Now, Harriet, Ah'm goin' to see if a little beatin' won't make you love me bettah,' and she says, 'Go 'way, it's you needs the beatin'.'"

"Does Pergolino beat his daughter too?"

"He suhtainly does. You come heah often, and you'll heah huh shriekin' somethin' awful. Aftah a

time she runs out heah with just huh usual expression. She hasn't got any othah, Ah reckon."

Our dinner was served, and we proceeded with it in silence. Verily, the food alone could attract only men with throats of steel.

"Waitah," said Mr. Marshall, "tell Mr. Pergolino to come heah. Ah have a friend Ah want to introduce him to."

Presently a short, stocky man approached our table. "Mr. Pergolino," said Mr. Marshall, "Ah wish to make you acquainted with mah friend, Mr. Gresham."

Pergolino nodded.

"You have the most beautiful fig tree I ever saw, Mr. Pergolino," I said.

He nodded again.

"Your chili is simply awful tonight," said Mr. Marshall.

Pergolino nodded.

"We won't keep you from yo' affaihs longah," said Mr. Marshall.

Pergolino nodded and turned away. He was a terrifying person, with his unchanging face of dark olive, and his ominously black eyes.

"How do you like him?" asked Mr. Marshall.

"I'm afraid of him," I said. "Does he always look like that?"

"Always. Ah nevah saw him smile or frown, eithah.

That's what gave him such a hold on his wife. She would storm, po' thing, and then try to make up. He nevah did eithah. Used his whip, if he felt like it, but nevah a wohd."

"He looks as though he might be handy with the stiletto."

"Shouldn't wondah if he wuh. But he's nevah known to use one. He doesn't need to."

The red dress appeared at the end of the court and fluttered past our table. My eyes met Elena's. It was just the same glance—immeasurable contempt or friendly interest, according to one's own interpretation. It was too steady for me; my eyes retreated from the field. As the red dress moved away again Mr. Marshall laughed.

"You ah just about hooked, Mr. Gresham. Bettah stay away from heah. Would you believe it, Ah used to be just crazy aftah that gihl, befo' the present Mrs. Marshall appeahed on the scene. Ah wanted to ma'y huh mo' than Ah evah wanted anything else, befo' or since."

"What, you, Mr. Marshall?" I exclaimed in amazement. "She's just a disconcerting bronze statue."

"Statue nothing. Ah tell you, Mr. Gresham, you ah mightily mistaken if you think Elena is a statue. She's always the same—always has the same expression, always weahs the same kind of clo'es. Ah declaih, Mr.

Gresham, when once you fall in love with a lady who is always just the same, you ah suhtainly lost."

"That may be," I said sceptically. "Dame Fashion doesn't agree with you."

"Dame Fashion has no sense at all. None at all. Ev'y time a lady changes huh style of dress or the way she does huh haih, she gives you a chance to get away from huh."

"Or to fall in love with her," I suggested.

"No, suh, you ah wrong theah. You think you fall in love all at once, but you don't. Wuh you évah sick and in the hands of a trained nuhse? Always the same white apron, always the same bonnet, always the same low voice and quiet smile. And did you get away without fallin' in love with huh?"

"The example isn't a good one," I insisted. "You're sick and wretched and too weak to resist."

"Well, suh, do you suppose you would fall in love with a society lady who came trippin' into yo' sick room, now in silk, now in lace, now all pink, now all blue; haih all done up on top of huh haid one day and down on huh neck the next? No, suh, what you'd like to say is, 'Oh, go 'way, you silly creature! Cain't Ah enjoy mah mizry without you troublin' me to show off yo' clo'es?' Look at that gihl now. Ah reckon that's the same dress she woah when Ah saw huh three yeahs ago. Those little black waves of haih, she had them

then. She held that pretty brown ahm ovah huh breast just as she does now. Huh eyes looked straight at you just as they do now. Ah tell you, Mr. Gresham, Ah don't daih to come heah often. Ah love Mrs. Mahshall, but befoah Ah get huh completely in mah haht, she changes. This gihl nevah changes. Ah suhtainly was crazy ovah huh."

"Suppose you had got her: how about your family?"

"They would have gone straight up in the aih, Ah reckon, and stayed theah. Mah fathah ca'ied on some-thin' awful; declaihed he'd shoot me fihst. But it wasn't necessary. Old Pergolino took to comin' in and lookin' at me, and lookin', until he drove me away. You'll get that too."

"I doubt it. But I can't see why he objected to you. I should think he would have considered you very eligible."

"He contracted huh away, a long time ago, to some Dago merchant in Houston. Partnah of Pergolino's, once; they came from Sicily togetheh. Elena says he's an old devil just like huh fathah. These foreigners engage theih daughtahs befo' they ah bohn, you know."

"Hideous practice!" I exclaimed.

"It suhtainly is. Waitah! Bring us some sherbet. We ah buhnin' up with yo' chili."

"It'll cool yo' throat, anyway," said Mr. Marshall as the waiter placed the glistening ice before us. There

was a rustle of silk at my shoulder. Elena was calmly surveying me. She stepped forward and shook a powdery substance into my dish.

“What is that?” I asked suspiciously.

“Sand,” she replied calmly, and tripped away. I sat back in my chair in amazement. Mr. Marshall chuckled.

“Mr. Marshall,” I said, rising in indignation. “I don’t like this.”

“What?” asked Mr. Marshall in a tone of surprise.

“You told Elena that I said I lacked sand to come here.”

“No, indeed, Ah didn’t. How could Ah? Haven’t you been with me evah since?”

“I don’t know how you managed it. But you must have done it.”

“Fiddlesticks, man. Don’t you think she sees how much sand you’ve got? If Ah wuh you, Ah’d take this as an invitation to come often. You’ll get Pergolino’s eyes on you, yet.”

I still believed that Marshall had informed on me, and I resolved that it would be many a day before I’d experiment again in frankness with him. And many a day before I’d eat pepper and sanded sherbet at Pergolino’s Garden.

CHAPTER X

THE EVERGLADES

SAND or no sand, I managed pretty frequently to dine at Pergolino's Garden. I was eating so much pepper that I doubted that I'd ever be able to taste anything again, and drinking so much vichy I was getting quite waterlogged with it. My opinion of it was coming to coincide with Doby's; but it was always served me without any order from me. Would Pergolino's daughter ever tire of that taunt? Never. It was a part of her changelessness.

Let it not be supposed that I was trying to get myself enamoured of a bronze statue, canopied under such ominous brows as Pergolino's. Mr. Marshall's exposition of the emotional appeal of changelessness was, to me, something new in philosophy, and my investigator's spirit was aroused. There was really something in it: I should have been distinctly disappointed had the girl appeared in pink or white, or if she had smiled or frowned: I should even have been disappointed had she abandoned the contemptuous inventories she took of me, or allowed me to substitute some other beverage for vichy. It was interesting to speculate upon what sort of soul lay behind her air of eternal sameness. Either

no soul at all, or an entrancingly mobile one. For no good reason I was inclined to adopt the latter hypothesis.

My mornings I spent in idling in Doby's office. Doby had a suite of rooms on the second floor of the Farmers' and Merchants' Building, on San Jacinto Street, just off Main. From the corner windows you could survey the entire business life of Asuncion. Sometimes, when the breeze blew from the southeast, I would settle myself there and watch the procession of carriages of the quality, driving in from the suburbs to shop in Grossfeld's "department" store across San Jacinto Street, or the slouchy bogus desperadoes loafing on the sidewalk in front of the Brazen Bar across Main Street. If I'd watch long enough, Doby said, I'd see some shooting there. I watched faithfully for many hours, but my luck was bad. There was a shooting affair early one morning, from which a stray bullet broke Doby's window pane. All I got out of it, however, was the excited account of the negro janitor, and a glimpse of the hearse as it passed up San Jacinto Street, convoyed by two mule loads of desperadoes from the Brazen Bar.

"Gresham," said Doby one day, "the University of Asuncion is saved. Mr. Allen is going to have us at his house for dinner, tonight; and he asked us particularly to bring you."

"It's a great honour, I recognise," I said, none too

cheerfully. "But tell me, Doby, how under the sun can I avoid letting him speak to me, before he has eaten, when he is in his own house?"

"Oh, Lucile will manage that. Nobody else will get in a single word until the dessert is served."

"Mrs. Arbuthnot is an angel!" I exclaimed fervently.

"She certainly is. But call her Lucile. We're all old friends now."

I thanked Doby for the privilege. Apparently you become old friends very promptly in Asuncion.

Doby was to call for me at the hotel at six o'clock. I settled myself under an electric fan in the lobby to wait for him. I waited long: Lucile was evidently having trouble again in running her house. But at last Doby appeared, with apologies in lieu of greetings, and escorted me to his surrey. Under its blue-fringed canopy sat Lucile and Catharine, pink and white and smiling, so cool and fresh that the ninety-eight degrees just then registered by the thermometer in the lobby dropped completely out of one's consciousness.

"Grandfather will surely finish you this time, Mr. Gresham," said Catharine. "He's always furious when dinner is late. He adores Mother and fears me, and he's long since shaken the last signs of life out of Father. So he will certainly devour you."

"I won't let him," said Lucile reassuringly. "Mr.

Gresham, I'm all wound up for tonight. I've two hours of steady talk in me. Do drive on, Doby, or I'll begin to run down."

Doby slashed his whip across the horses' flanks, and we cantered gaily up San Jacinto Street to Goliad Avenue, where the moneyed aristocracy of Asuncion dwell majestically in red granite and gray marble. The "Everglades," as Catharine had mischievously rechristened her grandfather's mansion (officially known as "The Fifty Oaks"), was a many-pillared structure of brick and marble, half hidden from the avenue by an enormous clump of wind-distorted post oaks. As we crossed the threshold we encountered our host, steaming with wrath.

"Eight o'clock! Eight o'clock! Doby, you certainly should set your clocks two hours ahead. Is that you, Mr. Gresham?" And he eyed me malevolently.

"O Father, what do you suppose happened to my maid Josie?" said Lucile, removing her hat. She was off now. Who would have supposed there was so much breath in her little body? She clung to Mr. Allen's arm, talking steadily, never stopping for an inhalation. Seated at table, the talking went on: how she succeeded in disposing of her food at the same time, it occurred to me afterward, was an unsolvable mystery. From time to time Mr. Allen looked me over and cleared his throat. But Lucile's eager narratives permitted no interruption.

At last she sat back in her chair with a little sigh and left me to my fate.

"Mr. Gresham," said Mr. Allen in a voice relatively pleasant. "Are you an atheist?"

"No," I replied.

"Are you a Socialist?"

"No."

"That's good," he mumbled. "Do you take occasion in your lectures to fight the advance of dangerous Socialistic doctrines?"

"No. My chair is philosophy. I take little interest in matters political."

Mr. Allen's face purpled. "Even a philosopher, sir," he shouted, "should be a man, and fight for the preservation of our sacred institutions."

I was completely crushed. But Lucile came to my rescue.

"Father, dear," she said persuasively, "Mr. Gresham comes from a Republican state, and he's a Democrat, so he never had any reason to be interested in politics."

"The man I admire is one who has the courage to lead a forlorn hope," declared Mr. Allen, only slightly mollified.

"Besides," said Lucile, with facile invention, "in Massachusetts the negroes hold the balance of power in politics. You wouldn't expect a man of spirit to mix up in such a filthy game."

Mr. Allen's guns were silenced for the moment.

"Dear me!" exclaimed Lucile, "it's nearly ten o'clock. And we promised to bring Mr. Gresham out to our house by half-past nine, to meet one of our neighbours, who wants to sell. Mr. Gresham is thinking of buying a home."

Mr. Allen looked at me with qualified approval. "Don't you think it's a little early, Mr. Gresham, to invest here? Don't you think you'd better wait and see how you get on at the University?"

"Mr. Gresham will get on fine," asserted Lucile. "I've heard him talk philosophy and it's frightfully tedious, but I can assure you his doctrines are sound.—Come on, all of you, we must be off."

"Those were wonderful fictions you invented to defend me with, Mrs. Arbuthnot," I remarked admiringly, when we were seated in the carriage.

"Don't call me Mrs. Arbuthnot. It sounds so terribly old. Call me Lucile. And those weren't fictions. You are really going to buy Mr. Henderson's place."

"Perhaps I am," I replied doubtfully. "But I never heard of it before."

"Don't let Lucile bully you into buying a house, Gresham," admonished Doby. "What does an unmarried man want with a house? You're far more comfortable in the hotel."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Lucile. "Mr. Gresham

never will know anything about Texas if he stays in that old hotel. It's nothing but a cheap imitation of a New York hotel. Texas is country, a big, wide country, and you have to live by yourself out away from everybody if you want really to know it. Besides, Mr. Gresham, you're sure to get into trouble if you stay down there."

"Trouble?" I repeated in astonishment. "How in the world can you get into trouble when you spend all your time philosophizing in your room?"

"Talk about fictions!" cried Lucile. "You spend your time philosophizing? As if I didn't know you were hanging around Pergolino's Garden all the time."

"Who told you I was?" I demanded. More of Mr. Marshall's duplicity, no doubt.

"Doby."

"I never contradict a lady," said Doby calmly. "But this sounds like news to me. As far as I know, Mr. Gresham has been there just once, and that time under my protection."

"He's admitted he's there most all the time," insisted Lucile. "And I know what he goes for. He's making love to the fair Elena."

"Not at all," I asserted stoutly. "The fair Elena treats me very badly—insolently, I should say, if she were not so fair. She treads me under her feet, and

as my feelings aren't involved, the experience comes cheap."

"Oh, what a lame explanation!" exclaimed Lucile. "I've seen Elena, myself. I know she's too pretty for anything. If I were a man, I'd go crazy about her, too. Every man in town has done it. Why, there was that plump, complacent Mr. Marshall talking about suicide over her, not two years ago. Once you get started you actually would shoot yourself, I do believe."

"You flatter me, Lucile."

"No, I don't. I just know how young you are. And inexperienced. You need somebody to take care of you. And so I'm going to have you settle down right by us, so I can mother you."

"Lucile," I protested, "by what authority do you undertake to mother me? I'm older than you."

"You're not. I know exactly how old you are. I asked President Brett. Besides, have you got a great big nuisance of a daughter like this?"

"Stop pinching me, Mamma!" shrieked Catharine. "What have I done?"

"You've got so big and you make me so old," said Lucile. "It's a kind of matricide."

"It wasn't really true that Mr. Henderson is waiting to see you tonight," Lucile admitted as we turned into Main Street. "So we'll put you down at your

wonderful hotel. Doby will bring you out tomorrow afternoon, and we'll all go and look over your house by moonlight. When you get the place all fixed up it will be too lovely for anything. And you'll be awfully grateful to me for finding it for you."

CHAPTER XI

VINE AND FIG TREE

THERE was a time when mankind laughed at the captive beaver, industriously constructing a dam across a counterfeit ditch where no water would ever flow. That beaver, as we now know, was given us as a mirror in which we might see our own absurd ways appropriately reflected. As a young collegian I had become acquainted with scores of human beavers with dams in all stages of completion. One of these beavers I knew whose dam was in the earliest stage of all. Every Sunday morning he would board a trolley bound for some highly advertised "Hurst" or "Crest" or "Glen" or "Vista." Another beaver had thrown a skeleton title around a sad little parallelogram of brier and rubble, and was stinting himself on his breakfasts to pay up his modest monthly instalments. A third was making daily pilgrimages to observe progress in the excavation of a lonely yellow hole, too big for death and too little for life, on a spot which you would localise from the Square as the shoulder of the sunset. A fourth was quartering a patient wife and two impatient sisters in the partly finished wing of a house on an abandoned farm that would be quite accessible as soon as the projected Cam-

bridge and Timothy Hill Interurban (franchise applied for) should become a reality. My friend took me out there, one Saturday morning, to hear the sweet rhythm of the hammers and the sweeter strains of the planes working down a hardwood floor. I sat on a carpenter's bench cushioned with shavings, and let the cold chill of fresh plastering permeate my soul, with the hope that it might strike to the heart of an unacknowledged beaver in my own being. Another friend was in the final stage of beaverdom. He inhabited a California bungalow, transplanted to Massachusetts, with dark wood and buff plaster, arches instead of partitions, tiled bathroom and all the rest. It wasn't paid for, and an irresistible business opportunity compelled him to remove to Fargo. He was a good friend of mine, but he tried to sell me that dam.

And so, if I accepted Lucile's invitation to present myself at her house in order to inspect the house she intended to have me buy, it was chiefly just to experience the innocent pleasure of being ordered about. In theory, we all love liberty; in practice no man is happy until some lady begins to shear off, one after another, all his constitutional rights. It does not matter greatly whether the lady be mother, wife, sweetheart, sister, or just some friendly outsider. As a member of the last class, Lucile was without a peer. She gave her orders with a finality that made them al-

most irresistible. She would no doubt order me to buy the house, and expect me to obey—something I had no intention of doing. But I had what seemed to me an impregnable defence: that the spirit was willing but the finances weak.

It was under a most brilliant moon that Lucile and Doby, Catharine and I set out to view Mr. Henderson's house. By Doby's lane and the public road, Lucile explained, the distance between the two houses was nearly two miles. But the same stream that washed the flank of Doby's house dashed in high water against Mr. Henderson's cellar door. There was a path along the stream which reduced the distance to a bare quarter of a mile. To this path we descended, and followed it in its winding way, now under overhanging pecans with trailing vines, now at the gravelly edge of the stream, among the thick willows.

"Isn't this the most romantic path?" cried Lucile enthusiastically. "Look at that pool, in the moonlight. Doesn't the water look as if it were in a silver bowl?"

"In the daylight," said Catharine, "you usually see a water moccasin wriggling across it. They come out here on the path to sun themselves."

"Water moccasins!" I exclaimed, recalling the tales of their deadliness that had drifted North.

"Yes," said Catharine. "There are thousands of

them in this stream. Don't ever be thinking philosophy when you come along this path."

"Don't pay any attention to Catharine," called Lucile, who was now some paces ahead. "She's in the horrible age. She loves to talk of snakes and skulls and such things."

"But there really are snakes here," persisted Catharine. "It's not a month ago Father killed an enormous one, under our dining-room table. Didn't you, Father?"

"Maybe I dreamed that snake," said Doby judiciously.

"You didn't," Catharine insisted. "I've got its skin."

"We never bother our heads about these snakes," said Lucile reassuringly. "They're not dangerous. Why, the negroes are running up and down this path all the time, barefooted. And they never get bitten."

"This path is a regular negro thoroughfare," explained Catharine. "This is the shortest way to town from the Black Land country. They come through here at all hours, but mostly by night. The blackest negroes! And they look as if they were all shoulders and chins."

"They're the nicest negroes in Texas," Lucile affirmed. "Real, old-fashioned ones. They never make

a bit of trouble, and they're so happy and childlike. I love to see them."

I made no comment. If I had intended to buy a house, I had already sufficient reason for keeping out of this neighbourhood. The snakes might be innocuous and the troops of negroes old-fashioned. But it would be long before I'd love to see them.

"Here we are!" cried Lucile. We ascended upon a sort of gravelled terrace, dominated by a long wall, almost blank, with eaves projecting above it.

"From the rear windows you have a lovely vista up the stream," said Lucile.

At this point the stream turned sharply, forming almost a right angle. Above us its course ran nearly straight to the low white arches of a bridge on the county road. Most of the stream lay in shadow, but here and there it glistened in the moonlight, and I seemed to see fitting upon it dark silhouettes, almost all chin and shoulders, from the Black Land country.

"That tunnel," said Lucile, pointing at a black hole at the base of the wall, "leads to the cellar."

"That's where the flood gets in at high water and the snakes at low water," murmured Catharine.

"Catharine is very naughty tonight," said Lucile severely. "She will be whipped. Come, let us go round to the front of the house."

We ascended a well-worn flight of stone steps, and

found ourselves on a sort of indistinct plain, limited in the distance by ragged lines of trees. The end of the house was as void of openings as the rear. It was buttressed by an immense chimney of grey stone.

“Isn’t that chimney beautiful?” demanded Lucile. “And look over there,”—she pointed into the darkness. “Those are your fig trees. And at the other end of the house is a grape arbour. Your own vine and fig tree—aren’t you growing enthusiastic? Come on.” And now I did begin to feel enthusiasm, for in front of the house, at a distance of some forty feet, was a live oak tree, not very tall, but with vast curving branches, reaching out almost horizontally, all draped with flowing moss that looked like raw silk under the moon.

“The prettiest tree around Asuncion,” Lucile declared. “And now look at the house. Isn’t the slope of the roof beautiful?”

I had never looked upon the roof of a dwelling house as anything but a means of shedding water, and this roof, very flat, sagging here and there into channels like river basins on a relief map, did not seem well adapted to such a purpose. Perhaps I’d see the beauty later, I thought.

“But you’ll have plenty of time to admire it,” said Lucile. “We’ll go in now.” Doby rapped. A little old man appeared at the door, with a kerosene lamp in

his hand. A gust of wind made the light flare up and fill the chimney with a blackening flame.

“Mr. Henderson,” said Lucile, “we’ve brought a gentleman to look at your house. He wants to buy it.”

Mr. Henderson blinked at us in a bewildered manner. “I don’ know as I want to sell,” he mumbled querulously. “I did want to sell, but nobody wanted to buy, so I reckon I’ve got to keep it.”

“We’ll come in,” said Lucile decisively. “You can sell now, as this gentleman wishes to buy.”

Mr. Henderson backed away from the door, and we entered. We were in a large room, extending apparently to the rear of the house, as there were two narrow windows in the wall before us. Between them was a large fireplace of rough limestone, pretty well shattered by the heat.

“Isn’t this an adorable mantel?” demanded Lucile. “One shelf for the guns and powder horns, another for the pots and pans. I just love this old fireplace.”

“This is a mighty good room,” said the old man. “Warm in winter, cool in summer. The hottest day, you lay your head against this stone wall, and you’ll sure keep cool.”

Catharine was inspecting a little black shadow on the wall. She beckoned to me.

“What is it?” I asked, when I had examined the

small object, which looked like a beetle with a roll of tape on its back.

“Scorpion,” said Catharine. “You’ll know him better when you begin to lay your head against this wall to keep cool.”

Lucile glanced at Catharine impatiently. Lucile had almost unlimited good nature, but it was getting exhausted.

“How much do you ask for your house, Mr. Henderson?” asked Lucile, assuming a tone of business.

“Well, I don’ know. I figured I ought to get fifteen hundred dollars for it, anyway. It’s a mighty good place, good fruit, good water. The house needs a little fixin’ up but—I don’ know.”

“That’s too much,” pronounced Lucile. “Mr. Gresham will give you twelve hundred dollars for it.”

“Lucile!” expostulated Doby. “You haven’t ascertained yet the wishes of Mr. Gresham. Why, he hasn’t even seen the rooms, and he don’t know how much ground there is.”

“I’ve seen the other rooms, and they are all right,” said Lucile. “And there’s plenty of ground for Mr. Gresham.”

“Mr. Gresham may have ideas of his own, though,” persisted Doby.

“Nonsense!” exclaimed Lucile. “As if I didn’t

have better ideas about a place than a mere stripling like Mr. Gresham."

"Stripling?" I queried. "Why, Lucile, you'll have me in knickerbockers next."

"That's where you belong," asserted Lucile. "Of course you'll buy this house. It's a splendid bargain."

My resolution was wavering. I didn't consider the house worth anything. But the live-oaks, the vines and the fig trees—weren't they cheap at the price? Why not let matters take their course? It would be amusing, anyway.

"Now, Gresham," said Doby, "you don't have to take this house if you don't want it. I don't think you want it. I don't see why the deuce you should."

"Of course he wants it," asserted Lucile. "Mr. Henderson, is it a trade?"

"I don't know. I think I ought to get a little more for it," complained the old man. "I'm an old man, and I ought to get something for my work. I've kep' up this house for thirty-seven years. It would have gone to wrack if it hadn't been for me. But it's just as you say."

"You don't want this house, Gresham?" said Doby.

"I don't know. I'm a young man and I suppose I'll have to keep it up another thirty-seven years. But it's just as Lucile says."

"Such simpletons I never saw!" cried Lucile indig-

nantly. "But Mr. Gresham will take it. You men will all meet in Doby's office tomorrow and fix up the details."

"No hurry," said Doby. "Mr. Gresham may want to change his mind. Besides he may not happen to have twelve hundred dollars on his person."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Lucile. "Everybody has a little bit of money like that. Anyway, if he hasn't got it he can go to the bank and borrow it."

Doby chuckled. "Lucile, you certainly have a remarkable head for business."

"Now you're making fun of me," expostulated Lucile. "Anyway, I put the deal through. Didn't I, Mr. Gresham?"

"You certainly did."

"Well, then, what are you all laughing at?" demanded Lucile, beginning to laugh herself. We laughed ourselves out of the house and turned to look at it once more in the moonlight. The old man was standing in the doorway gazing at us in deep bewilderment. He raised the lamp high to throw its rays upon us, and his bald head shone like a reflector till a gust of wind blew the light out.

CHAPTER XII

A SMOKELESS KEY

THE papers had passed, and I was possessed of vine and fig tree. Doby was still sceptical as to my asserted independence of judgment in the matter: according to the tales he circulated about town, Lucile had simply torn me from my footing and transplanted me out there by the stream. President Brett called at my room in the hotel and urged me to back out. There was no reason for me to dance to Lucile's fiddle, he said.

"Mr. President," I said, "as for dancing to Lucile's fiddle, that's what we all do. Doby does, Mr. Allen does, and consequently you and the whole college do."

"And it's a solemn ballet." The President's eyes twinkled. "I had a little house picked out for you, in the Faculty Row. You could have had the professors running in and out every day."

"Are you living there, Mr. President?"

"God forbid that I should ever live there," said the President energetically.

"Then what is your objection to my encamping out there in the country?"

“I haven’t any, now I think of it. Only don’t dance yourself to death.”

In ten days I was sheltered most uncomfortably under my own roof. The house was stuffy, and its population of little scorpions was incredibly numerous. They showed no disposition to cross arms with me, it is true; they scampered up the walls whenever I got near them. Doby said that they wouldn’t sting me unless they happened to fall off the ceiling on me at night, when they might sting in their panic. Anyway, it wouldn’t hurt me much; he had often been stung and minded the sting hardly more than that of a bumble-bee. As I had been a prudent boy, all I knew of a bumble-bee’s sting was derived from inferences based upon his size and temper. The idea of being stung by a scorpion was very distasteful to me, and often at night I had an impulse to pull the sheet up over my head, like a child afraid of the dark.

My days were pleasant enough. It was a great delight to walk about my grounds, which comprised several acres of mesquite and cactus. There was a garden which I at first thought was only a thicket of bull netles, but which proved on further examination to be a mat of pale-leaved vines, with here and there a vast striped melon, only to be found by stumbling over it. The grape arbour, which lay about fifty feet from the door of the house, was a sort of roof of vines supported

by cedar posts ten feet high. The grapes were turning blue and I anticipated much joy in them. But they proved to be wild mustang, one the best of grapes in appearance, and certainly the worst in every other respect. Centuries of persecution by the voracious mocking-bird has so changed the nature of this grape that its skin has become like leather and its juice like a tanning fluid. Native Texans make wine of that grape and drink it, too. What wonder that the Mexicans fear Texas?

I had a grizzled old negro working about the place, clearing away disfiguring shrubs and piling rubbish to burn. He was lazy and more or less insolent, but he interested me. He was inquisitive about the North, but contemptuous of it; up there, he understood, the white men weren't any better than negroes.

"Texas ain't no mo' what she used to be, sah," he would say dolefully. "Too many No'thenehs comin' down yeah. Dey'll call a niggah Mistah, and I 'low dey'd eat wid niggahs. Dat's de kind of folks dey is, sah."

"Well, I can't see how that hurts the negroes."

"It suah do huht de niggahs, sah. A niggah ain't a white man, and you cain't make him one, sah. Dem no 'count young niggahs is boun' to leahn dat, sah."

"That's probably true, Uncle, but I don't see what it has to do with the Northerners."

“Well, sah, it use to be, when a niggah didn’t have no clo’es, he’d go to a white gen’leman and say, ‘Cohnel, mah clo’es is all woah out ; haven’t you got some ole clo’es Ah could have?’ And he’d look mighty fie’ce and say, ‘Go ’way, you ole beggin’ niggah.’ And den he’d say, ‘Wait a minute, Jim, Ah’ll see what Ah kin do foh you,’ and den he’d go to his room an’ come back wid some oder clo’es on an’ gib you de ’dential suit he’d had on. He’d pull off de buttons an’ kick it roun’ on de flo’ so it wouldn’t look like white folks’ clo’es. But de ’dential suit, sah.”

“And now?” I queried.

“Well, sah, do you know what dese No’thehn gen’lemen do wi’ dere ole clo’es? Dey sells dem, sah, to de ole clo’es man. Bimeby when de real gen’lemen is all dead and dis yeah state is full ob No’thenahs, a po’ ole niggah cain’t get no clo’es, nohow. Ah reckon dey’s jus’ got to tie deyselves up in a bale ob hay. Yes, sah.”

“Say, Gresham,” said Doby one day, “my boy Peter tells me you’ve got that worthless old Uncle Daniel working round your place. If you’ll take my advice, you’ll fire him and get a young nigger with some work in him.”

“I’m having a hard enough time to manage Uncle Daniel,” I protested. “How do you suppose I’d manage a young negro? Everybody says the only

good negroes are those that were trained under slavery."

"That I consider just a part of the good-old-times illusion," said Doby. "The older generation always thinks the younger generation is going to the dogs, whether they are whites or negroes."

"What about the educated negro?" I demanded, fancying I had Doby at a disadvantage now.

"Oh, the educated nigro is all right if he's really educated," said Doby calmly. "You don't consider all those white boys you turn out at the college educated, do you? Half of them would be better off if they never saw the inside of a college. You ought to kick them out, but you don't dare to. Same way with a nigger college. Only, they ought to kick out nine out of ten—possibly ninety-nine out of a hundred. But they're the same as you, they don't dare to."

"But suppose a negro were really educated, how could he make a living?" I persisted. "Suppose he went into law?"

Doby shook his head. "Couldn't make a living in this town. You see every lawyer, if he's a Southern gentleman, will take a case for a nigro for nothing. I reckon I've tried a thousand cases for negroes, but I never got a fee out of one of them. Often I've had to pay the court fees myself."

"Why do you do it?" I demanded.

“ Well, the way I look at it is this: The negroes are not responsible for being here. We brought them. And so we’re bound to look after them and see that they get justice.”

“ Your kind of justice,” I suggested.

“ Yes, our kind. It ain’t all it should be, but in my opinion, it’s better than your Massachusetts kind.”

I decided to drop the argument. It was wholly vain to try to make Doby see the matter in a true light. Anyway, he knew he had a certain advantage over me in such an argument because he liked the negro, and I could not conceal the fact that I did not. It just gave Doby pleasure to see the troops of negroes filing past his house along the stream. I would have preferred that they should choose another route. They annoyed me, especially at night, when rollicking bands of them disturbed my sleep with their singing and laughing. The negroes around Asuncion are said to be remarkably free from criminal tendencies ; nevertheless I decided to equip my doors with locks, which my predecessor in the house had failed to provide. This seemed strange to me, and I mentioned the fact to Doby.

“ As I look at it,” said Doby, “ the only protection there is for a house is a man. But I’ll show you what I use for a lock.” And he drew from a convenient drawer a huge revolver. “ That’s the right key, too,” he said, handing me a heavy copper cartridge. “ Smokeless.”

A lock with a smokeless key. I resolved to equip my house in like manner. But after a few days I had forgotten the matter, and had fallen into the universal Asuncion habit of going to sleep with all my doors open.

One night I was awakened by a horrible wailing up the stream. I sprang out of bed, dressed myself and looked around for a weapon. There was nothing at hand but a hammer. I went out through my cellar door to the negro thoroughfare, and stole cautiously from shadow to shadow up the stream toward the apparent seat of the trouble. The night was dark, but I was sufficiently guided by the wailing, which continued uninterruptedly. At last I had the relief of discovering that it proceeded from a treetop—some vile Texas bird singing to its mate.

I returned to my house admonishing myself that it is a fool who believes all that he hears in Texas. None the less, I resolved to possess myself of a more effective weapon than a hammer. The next day I made the round of the hardware stores in search of a pistol. There is some stupid law which makes it unprofitable for dealers to sell pistols, but I found a dealer who was willing to lease me one for ninety-nine years. It was a second-hand gun, not very large, but savage of mien. It worked perfectly, the dealer said, and he pulled the trigger and made it go click, click, click. I knew nothing of pistols then, and only a little more now, but

I felt reluctant to make inquiries that would seem naïve. So I bought a box of cartridges and returned to my house, intending to learn all about the pistol by myself.

I loaded its chambers and pointed it at a pecan tree on the bank above the creek and pulled the trigger. It went off with a report like artillery. It didn't content itself with one shot, but kept going off until, I judged, all its cartridges were used up. I held it steady until I felt sure it was through, and then sat down to examine it. Surely, there must be some way of shutting it off after you have killed your man. After much fruitless tapping at the mechanism, I bethought me of the principle that if you want really to know a thing you must spy upon it when it is in action. So I loaded it up again, and pointed it at the pecan which had survived my earlier fusillade. The pistol behaved in exactly the same way, except that it kicked more, and gave me considerable difficulty in keeping it from turning around and shooting me.

"I'll ask Doby about it," I said to myself. "He knows all about guns, and he's charitable to the ignorant."

So that evening I carried the pistol over to Doby's house and showed it to him.

"Oh, you've got one of those guns," said Doby, handling it cautiously. "Is she loaded?"

"I don't think so," I replied. "I loaded her up and

she went off ever so many times. Whether she finished or not I don't know."

"A fellow down on San Jacinto Street," said Doby reflectively, "got one of these guns and carried it around in his hip pocket. Well, one day he touched the trigger by accident, and she went off. He realised that she was knocking the bark off one of his heels, but he didn't dare to stir till she was through. He didn't know what she might do next. I'd advise you to take this gun down to the bridge and drop it into the river."

"Then what kind of gun do you advise me to get?" I asked, somewhat ruefully.

"My advice is, don't get any. Nobody is apt to shoot you, but if any one was, he'd fill you all full of holes before you'd made up your mind what to do."

Doby's words were wisdom, I knew. I took the pistol home, however, loaded it and put it on the high mantel shelf, where it could hardly hurt anything.

My experiment in firearms had one unforeseen effect: it closed up the negro thoroughfare. Possibly some negroes were passing on the creek level when I was bombarding the pecan. Anyway, the stream of negroes from the Black Land country was diverted from the creek half a mile above my house, and I had nothing to disturb my slumbers but the croaking bull frog, the wailing bird and the howls of a lobo in the cedar brakes along the river,

CHAPTER XIII

MORALS AND COOKERY

AT the time when I established myself in my house, it was my intention to lay in a large stock of eatables, mostly in tins, on which I could breakfast, and occasionally lunch. For my dinners I'd go down to the hotel or to Pergolino's Garden. It was three-quarters of a mile to the street-car line, and the road was very dusty and hot. I had, however, long since ceased concerning myself about heat in a country so interesting to me as Texas. A daily car ride of three miles, followed by two or three hours in the cool rooms of the hotel, or in the pavilion of Pergolino's Garden, was a pleasant conclusion to my scholastic labours. For I was trying hard to make the philosophy of the schools mean something to me again—a remarkably difficult thing to do where life trips along so nonchalantly as it does in Texas.

Either the stock of vichy had run out, or Elena had tired of persecuting me. I somewhat regretted it. Once in a while she would stand at my table, with her air of unchanging sunshine, and address to me a remark of little meaning but much music. Then I would make up my mind to dine at the hotel, for my soul's sake,

and for three or four days would carry out my resolution bravely. The food would grow stale to my palate and I would yield again to the yearning, we'll say, for the peppered dishes at Pergolino's Garden. Most likely Elena would then remain at a distance until I prepared to depart, when she would take occasion to whip Professor Sciarli. And, be it confessed, the poor dog's yelps sounded rather musical to me.

But this mode of living wasn't permitted to last long. One evening, when I was dining at Doby's house, what seemed to be a sudden thought interrupted Lucile's flow of discourse.

"How are you living, nowadays, Mr. Gresham?" she demanded.

"By various bachelor devices," I replied evasively, with a vague fear that more "bossing" was to follow.

"Where do you get your meals?"

"At home, mostly."

"But how can you? You haven't a cook."

"I buy things already cooked."

"Horrible! You'll surely become a skeleton if you try to live that way."

"Still, I appear to be gaining weight." It was an unfortunate statement, I knew as soon as I had made it. A look of suspicion came over Lucile's face.

"Do you get all your meals at home?"

"No. Sometimes I dine at the hotel."

“And more often at Pergolino’s Garden. Don’t you?”

“Yes.”

“Now, I’m not going to have a suicide on my hands,” said Lucile with determination. “You are to take your meals with us until you have made proper arrangements for keeping house. Do you hear?”

“I hear,” I replied meekly.

“You will not be permitted to absent yourself from a single meal without express permission. Do you hear?”

“I hear.”

“Oh, Lucile,” said Doby, “Mr. Gresham is a bachelor and ought to have a little liberty. He is of age, anyway.”

“He’s a mere infant,” asserted Lucile. “He really has to be bossed, or he’ll either starve himself to death or shoot himself. Besides, he’d rather have his meals with us than down town. Wouldn’t you, Mr. Gresham?”

“Of course I would,” I replied with all the conviction I could command.

“Mr. Gresham would have to say that whether it’s true or not,” said Catharine.

“Terrible child, he wouldn’t either. Would you, Mr. Gresham?”

“Of course I wouldn’t!” I asserted.

“Don’t you see, Mamma, he has to say that, too?” persisted Catharine.

“Oh, go ’long, baby. I just know Mr. Gresham speaks the truth. Besides, it doesn’t make any difference: he has to eat here, whether he likes or not.”

So I became for a time a regular guest at Doby’s table. I liked it, too. But it was a terrible waste of time. Lucile was always late; three hours a day might be set down to waiting for her to appear. Besides, she had so much to say that the meal dragged on an hour and a half or two hours. When we rose from table there were concluding chapters of several narratives that had been broached during the meal, but not exhausted. Altogether, I concluded that to eat at Lucile’s table was an occupation capable of absorbing most of a man’s time. A most agreeable one, too, if one could only make his living by it.

In the hours and hours that I spent waiting for Lucile, Catharine did her best to entertain me. She was prevailingly a very serious young person, with a thirst, real or assumed, for solid information, which my former work as official cutter on the encyclopædia had placed me in an excellent position to slake. If it bored her, she never made the fact apparent. For a while I made myself believe that it bored me. But sooner or later a philosopher is compelled to subject himself to the painful process of self-analysis. Cath-

arine was very pretty, and at times beautiful. Her voice was musical, and her smiles were entrancing. Now, what is the natural attitude of a man of twenty-seven toward such a girl as that? Especially when his first youth has lain dormant in the benumbing atmosphere of books, dead and living? There is just one natural attitude; all else is but pose. All my discourses, from the life history of the stegomyia to the electrical theory of matter, amounted to nothing more than an inept and ludicrous way of expressing a feeling that three short Anglo-Saxon words would express aptly and well. I was like a blind and anæmic caged bird, trying to build a nest of tenpenny nails.

At first I tried occasional excursions to Pergolino's Garden, on the principle of divide and conquer. The changeless Elena did not seem very interesting to me: something must be wrong with the principle. Accordingly I entered upon the computations as to waste of time, so seriously recorded above, and made up my mind to keep house for myself, before all my learned verbiage should disintegrate and expose to Catharine the trite biologic fact that lay behind it.

So I told Lucile that I was going to set up bachelor housekeeping. She scolded me severely for the ingratitude I manifested in seeking to desert her hospitable board, but she knew exactly where I could get the servants I needed. There was a colored pair,

Wesley and Lily, who had served in her house and were very efficient and trustworthy. She would send her maid Josie to tell them to come to see me.

The next day found me stocking up with all manner of utensils and supplies. And on the following day I entered upon my life as master of a house. To have two servile pairs of arms at your disposal, to be able to give this order or that, knowing it will be carried out to the letter : why, this is, in a small way, to be among the lords of the earth. I liked it.

Wesley was a lanky, dark-brown negro, rather good-looking, with a perpetual bow in his makeup, and a "Yes, sah!" always hovering on his lips. He worked faithfully and in a week wrought more of a transformation in my grounds than old Uncle Daniel would have achieved in a year. He was jolly, in a discreet way, and full of quaint sayings. Lily was a coal-black negress, squat and ill-favoured. She had a very morose expression, and though I did my best at maintaining a seigneurial manner in her presence, she always made me feel that she considered me an upstart member of the master class. I couldn't understand very well either her speech or her manner. She seemed to be just a kind of human hippopotamus. Still, she kept the scorpions swept out, made good "hot bread" and corncakes, and fried everything else she laid hands on.

After ten days of fried food I began to yearn for

something else, but I did not have the courage to suggest a different kind of cooking. A happy thought occurred to me: at the time when I was captured by Lucile I had quite a stock of food in cans. I'd have a supper exclusively out of tin, and be independent of lard for once. So I called Lily.

"Lily," I said, "don't cook anything for my supper. All I want is some canned salmon, canned tomatoes and peaches, and crackers."

Lily looked at me venomously. "Dey ain't no No'thehn gen'leman goin' to tell me what I kin cook an' what I cain't."

"Cook anything you please, Lily. Only serve me just what I ordered."

"A real gen'leman don' know nuffin' 'bout what dey is in de pantry."

"That's about enough, Lily. You do as I ordered."

"Ah don' know as Ah caihs to take ohdehs f'm po' white trash."

"Go, pack your things and get out of this house as quickly as you can!" I shouted in anger.

"All right. Ah don' caih to stay heah anudder minute." And she retreated to the kitchen, laughing shrilly. In a quarter of an hour she slammed the door, and I saw her from my window, trudging away, a gunny bag of her effects over her shoulder.

I had sent Wesley to town to bring supplies, and he

had not yet returned. Presently he came singing down the road. Pity to lose so good a servant, I thought. I went around the house to tell him the news.

“Good evenin’, sah,” he said, pulling off his hat.

“Wesley, I’m sorry to say I’ve had trouble with Lily. She got insolent, and I had to discharge her.”

“Lily is a mighty mean woman, sah,” said Wesley sympathetically. “She ain’t so mean as she was befo’ she got religion. But she’s so mean nobody cain’t keep huh long.”

“I don’t see what got into her,” I said. “I ordered her to give me some canned stuff for supper, and she got very angry and insulted me.”

“Yes, sah, Lily jes’ done ca’ied all dat can’ stuff away to huh muddah, sah.”

“She might have told me. I didn’t care for it, anyway. But I can’t take her back now. I’m sorry to lose you, Wesley.”

“You ain’t goin’ to discha’ge me too, sah, jes’ because Lily done cut up?” pleaded Wesley, now for the first time showing genuine concern.

“Why, no, Wesley. I’m not discharging you. But you have to go where Lily does, don’t you?”

“No, sah, Ah don’ need to go with Lily. Ah’d prefuh to stay with you, sah.”

“But how would we manage the cooking, Wesley?”

Wesley pondered a few moments. Then his face

covered itself with smiles. "Ah tell you, sah. Ah've got a sistah, named Fanny Zephrina. She can cook a heap bettah den Lily."

"Well, can you get Fanny Zephrina to come here and cook for me?"

"Yes, sah. She don' live fah. Ah could get huh in ten minutes, sah."

"Well, go and get her right away, or we won't have any supper."

Wesley set out at a trot, and in half an hour I heard pans rattling about in the kitchen. In an incredibly short time there was a tapping on my door.

"Suppah is sehved, sah." It was a high voice but a pleasant one.

"Are you Fanny Zephrina?" I asked.

"Yes, sah." She was a light brown negress, rather pretty and very smiling. What an excellent trade! I thought. It certainly proved to be. The house under Fanny Zephrina began to rival in tidiness the grounds under Wesley.

A few days later old Uncle Daniel, who still came around occasionally to see if he couldn't get an odd job, approached me very politely as I lay in my hammock.

"Good evenin', sah," he said, bowing.

"Good evening, Uncle Daniel."

"Ah see, sah, yo' boy Wesley's got a new woman."

"Yes, I had to discharge Lily, so Wesley got his sister to come and stay here."

"Sistah! Oh, ho! ho! ho! 'Scuse me, sah, but Ah cain't he'p laughin'. She ain't no mo' his sistah den Ah is. Oh, ho! ho! ho!"

"Get out of here, you impudent old rascal. Don't let me see you again before you learn how to behave in the presence of white folks."

"'Scuse me, sah," said Uncle Daniel humbly, backing away. "Ah's pow'ful sorry Ah done said it, sah."

"Go on," I commanded. Uncle Daniel withdrew.

"What a confounded slander!" was my first thought. But after a few moments' reflection I began to have misgivings. Wesley and Fanny Zephрина didn't really look any more alike than any other two negroes. And they seemed unnecessarily friendly for mere brother and sister. I'd have to inquire into this.

"Wesley!" I shouted. "Come here!"

"Yes, sah," called Wesley, coming round the house at a trot.

"Wesley," I said accusingly, "you said Fanny Zephрина was your sister."

"Yes, sah."

"Well, she isn't."

"No, sah, she's mah wife."

"Your wife? Why, Lily is your wife."

"No, sah. Ah done divohced Lily."

“Divorced her? When did you do that?”

“After she done cut up so heah Ah said, ‘Go, ’long, niggah, you ah too mean a woman foh me!’”

“Have you told her you have divorced her?”

“No, sah. Ol’ Uncle Daniel, he’ll tell huh sho’ ’nuff.”

Now, how was I to manage a situation like that? Either Wesley was a master of expression or he was quite unconscious of wrongdoing. I decided I’d better talk to Doby about it.

“That will do now, Wesley. I may have something more to say later.”

“Yes, sah.” And Wesley returned to his work, and began whistling blithely. The matter didn’t seem to brook delay, so I set out for town, to call on Doby in his office.

“You’re a stranger here,” said Doby as I entered his door. “Come into my private office and cool off. Then we’ll go out to Pergolino’s Garden and have a sandwich and some vichy.”

“I’m having trouble in my house, Doby, and I want your advice,” I said, as he closed the door to his front office.

“Trouble? That’s too bad.”

“You know I started housekeeping with Wesley and Lily. Well Lily got impudent and I fired her. Wesley substituted his sister Fanny Zephrina, for Lily; and we got on nicely for a while.”

"Yes?"

"Well, I've discovered that Fanny Zephрина isn't his sister."

"Can she cook?" asked Doby obtusely.

"Yes, indeed; much better than Lily. But you don't get the point. She isn't really Wesley's sister."

"You say she can cook," said Doby pigheadedly. "I can't see just where your trouble lies."

"Oh, yes, you can, Doby."

"Gresham," said Doby, his eyes twinkling, "did you ever hear of the gentleman from Massachusetts who started out to monogamise his dogs and cats? He nearly killed them and they all left him. His intentions were good, sir, but the cat and dog tribes are just about where they were."

"I get your point, Doby," I said, suppressing my indignation. "But this isn't a question of dogs and cats; it's a question of human beings. You Southerners don't seem able to conceive of the negroes as human beings capable of having any morals."

"Oh, I don't know about that," protested Doby. "After all's said, I think the nigro has a fair share of morals. You never see nigro children run their old people off: about every servant in this town is carrying things home to an old parent. I call that moral. You don't ever see a little nigro baby starving on a bottle. When a nigro woman dies and leaves a baby, there is

always some other negro woman to bring it up along with her own, and it don't take her long to forget which of the two is her own. I call that moral. If I were to go bankrupt today, most of my white friends would give me the cold shoulder, but I reckon there are fifty negroes in this town would work for me for nothing, if necessary, and help put me on my feet again. My house has stood unlocked for twenty years, and Lucile throws her jewelry around everywhere; hundreds of negroes have been in and out, but she's never missed a thing. No, sir, Gresham, you ain't justified in saying the negroes haven't just as big a stock of morals as we have. Their ideas ain't the same as ours, that's all I can see there's to it."

Doby is so obsessed with the good qualities of the negroes that he is past reasoning with. But I resolved to drop the matter, as I was a pretty small minority in Texas.

CHAPTER XIV

RAILWAY JUSTICE

DOBY handled the legal business for the A. & S. A. Railway. He conducted a general practice also, but this, presumably, was not very lucrative. His main source of income was his A. & S. A. salary, and I understood, from hints picked up among my other friends in town, that his position with the railway was none too secure. Too many cases were going against the railway to suit the directors. Cases usually go against the railway companies, in Texas, but the directors were residents of New York, and probably knew very little of the local legal situation.

I accompanied Doby on a number of trips to the several county seats along the road, to observe the way in which justice is dispensed in Texas. We usually had an excellent case, according to Doby's preliminary account, and we were usually badly defeated. On our return Doby would say that after another such shameless verdict he would throw up his position; which meant, to me, that he would watch the mails with anxiety for a long envelope containing the announcement that his services would no longer be required.

One morning he sent me word by Peter that he was

going to try a case, in the afternoon, down in La Jolla County. He thought it might interest me, and he would look for me at the station, at ten. I was getting tired of those tedious legal proceedings, but I had never been so far down as La Jolla. So ten o'clock found me getting on the train with Doby.

The case, I learned, when Doby and I had installed ourselves in the white section of the accommodation car, was nothing but a cow case. Somebody's cow had been run over by an A. & S. A. engine, and the owner wanted damages. I was decidedly disappointed: I had hoped that it would be at least a personal injury case. But Doby said that you never could tell but that a cow case would produce the very best of entertainment for a layman. There would be few technicalities, and the matter would probably wind itself up promptly.

We arrived at La Jolla about noon and put up at the A. & S. A. Hotel—a wretched frame structure with not a tree or shrub in its junk-strewn grounds. We ate our dinner under conditions of fierce competition, for the screens had been removed from the windows in the interest of the breeze—which happened to be non-existent—and the flies had evidently been multiplying without interruption in these parts ever since Coronado brought them from Mexico. Just before two in the afternoon we made our way across the glowing plaza to the court house, a red brick building with mansard roof,

which looked as if it were challenging the sun to a heating contest.

In the trial room we found the judge, the sheriff and the plaintiff's counsel, together with a group of underfed individuals ("vermin" Doby characterised them in a whisper), some of the stuff of which the jury was to be made. The Court was a short, stout person, with fierce, sandy mustache and an incorruptible scowl. The sheriff was a neutral character, a Middle Western expatriate, to judge from his accent; the plaintiff's counsel, a suave, timid man, who acted very much as if he were under the special protection of the Court. Doby greeted the gentlemen cordially and accepted their somewhat cool compliments. I seated myself on a bench where I was soon joined by Doby, who was swearing eloquently in a low tone.

"It's going against us, Gresham," he said.

"How do you know?" I inquired.

"How do I know? Can't you see how those infernal scoundrels received me? The case is all cut and dried, mark my words."

For an hour or more the Court was engaged in the dreadfully tedious labour of selecting a jury. Most of the time I was dozing, but at intervals I awoke to hear Doby making a great turmoil about something. Doby was the only person in the room who appeared to be exercised about it; everybody else wore a resigned

look, as if time were being spent to no purpose. Doby, I had always believed, was an excellent trial lawyer; but in so far as a layman could judge, the jury eventually selected was just about what it would have been if the A. & S. A. had failed to send a representative. The jurymen, assembled on their benches, were a remarkable aggregation. Bloodless, almost fleshless, they sat with their narrow shoulders drooping, their long thin necks craning forward—you would have surmised that the business at hand was an exposition of Adam's apples, of which there were several prizeworthy specimens.

The jury selected, the Court proceeded to business. Several witnesses for the plaintiff gave their testimony. The gist of it was that an A. & S. A. train had killed a very fine cow, valued at \$350 by the owner. A great deal of testimony was introduced having no apparent bearing upon the case; hearsay evidence as to the absentee ownership of the road, the original crookedness of its financing, etc. Doby made objection after objection, all of which were unceremoniously overruled by the Court. The clerk of the court seemed not even to consider it worth while to note the objections: again and again Doby would cry: "Your Honor, I insist that my objection and your ruling be recorded." Plainly the struggle was telling on Doby. He kept his courteous tone, but his voice was beginning to tremble. It was a great relief to me when the judge announced

that court was adjourned until the following morning. We returned to our hotel. Doby was very much pre-occupied and was swearing internally, I judged. After supper he put on his hat and slipped away. I saw no more of him until midnight.

I was smoking on the veranda when Doby returned. "Come into my room," he said somewhat gruffly. "I want to tell you something about this case."

"This is the most infernal, dirty mess you ever heard of, Gresham," said Doby lighting a cigar. "You won't believe me when I tell you what I've found out. In the first place, this court is just a family nest. The sheriff is the judge's brother-in-law and the clerk is the sheriff's son. The plaintiff's counsel is the judge's second cousin. The judge is under obligations to the plaintiff, because several years ago when the judge shot the latter's father, no steps were taken to prosecute him."

"I never heard of anything like it," I said in dismay.

"Yes. But that's only the beginning. The judge, I have learned, is the most considerable capitalist in this county. You might say he owns this county. I have discovered that at least eight out of those twelve jurors are in debt to him. One, and perhaps two of the others are in debt to the sheriff."

"Heavens, that looks bad for us, doesn't it?" I exclaimed,

“It certainly does. Another thing I’ve found out: the plaintiff’s case is plain highway robbery. We killed his cow, that’s admitted. But I have found out that she had lump jaw, and was valuable only for her hide—say, five dollars; and we didn’t damage the hide seriously. Further, the plaintiff cut down our fence to get her on our track, and employed two niggers to herd her there till a train should come along. The first time they tried it, she jumped off the track and saved herself. Then they ran her down into a culvert, where she got her legs fast, and of course was run over.”

“Doby,” I said, “I can’t believe it.”

“I told you you wouldn’t believe it. But it’s all facts.”

“How did you find out about it?”

“I found out from the niggers round this town. A nigger ain’t like a white man. He’ll tell you the truth, if you know how to go after it. And he don’t expect you to buy it of him, either.”

“I suppose you’ll subpoena them as witnesses?”

“Oh, Lord, no. Niggers will talk, but they don’t dare to testify. Not in this rotten county.”

“Of course you will appeal, if the decision goes against you?”

“I can’t appeal. Under the laws of Texas you can’t appeal from the county court on a case that involves no more than this one does. If the infernal scoundrel

had called his cow worth \$500 we could have taken him up to Austin with his case. As it is, there ain't a thing for us to do if we lose. And we're sure to lose."

"Well, then, what's the use in fighting the case at all?"

"I'm paid by the railroad to fight the case, and I'm going to fight it. Besides, nothing would give these scoundrels more pleasure than to see me drop the case and report it undefended. It would ruin me with the A. & S. A. Fact is, they're doing all they can to put me out of the case by force. Didn't you see that?"

"Why, no. I didn't suppose they could possibly do such a thing."

"Didn't you observe they were trying to make me mad? They were trying to force me to say something disrespectful to the Court, so he could slap me into jail for contempt. They didn't succeed, but they came mighty near doing it. I don't know what will happen, now I've got the truth of the case. If you see me getting too mad, you catch my eye, will you? and try to cool me off."

When we went to the court house next morning, Doby was grimly determined to keep his temper. He had passed a restless night, and was nervous and feverish. I tried to keep his mind off the case as much as possible, but my success in this was not noteworthy.

Doby left me in the court room, where most of the

local worthies were assembled. He was gone some twenty minutes. When he re-entered the court room he was white and trembling with indignation.

“If it please Your Honor,” he said in a loud voice, “I beg to report that the records of yesterday’s proceedings have been abstracted from the files.”

The judge pretended to look incredulous.

“If it please Your Honor, I will inform you where those records are. They are in the inside coat pocket of the counsel for the plaintiff.”

The counsel for the plaintiff started, then looked appealingly at the judge. His Honor cleared his throat and said:

“The counsel for the A. & S. A. must be mistaken.”

“I am not mistaken, Your Honor, and I will prove it. I hold in my hand an ink-well weighing about two pounds.” And Doby held up for inspection the ponderous glass receptacle. Then, turning to the counsel for the plaintiff he said, almost gently:

“Now, if it please Your Honor, unless the counsel for the plaintiff immediately surrenders those records into the hands of the Court, I will this minute knock his damn head off.”

The counsel for the plaintiff turned very pale and produced from his coat pocket a bulky packet of papers. There was a stir in the court room. The judge rapped furiously.

“Ohdah in the coht!” he shouted. “Mistah Arbuthnot, I sentence you to ten days in jail fo’ contempt of coht.”

“I would accept a fine, Your Honor,” replied Doby, looking significantly at the judge. “Your Honor better not sentence me to jail. Your Honor will order the sentence commuted to a fine of ten dollars.”

The judge gazed furiously at Doby for a few moments. It looked to me as if that lump-jaw cow would cost a human life or two.

Doby is a mild man, but a dangerous one, at times. He looked pretty dangerous just now, and the judge swallowed his rage and commuted the sentence as Doby advised. The case then proceeded regularly enough.

We had little evidence, and the Court threw most of it out, on what grounds I was not able to see. The jury decided in fifteen minutes that the plaintiff’s full claim was just, and it was ordered by the Court that the A. & S. A. pay over to the plaintiff’s attorney within thirty days the sum of \$350. Doby and I retreated to our hotel to wait for the afternoon train to Asuncion.

“Do you know what I’m going to do, Gresham?” inquired Doby. “First, I’m going to have that corrupt judge put off the bench. Next, I’m going to have him disbarred. And then I’m going to kill him.”

Doby was serious, I knew; still the order of vengeance seemed almost humorous to me.

“If you are going to do all these things, Doby, why don't you kill him first?”

“You speak like a Northerner, Gresham,” replied Doby sternly. “I intend to exhibit him before the great State of Texas, trailing the sacred ermine through the slime. It is my public duty to disgrace him, and my private duty to kill him. My public duty comes first.”

A week later I was in Doby's office when the morning mail came in. Doby spent an unusually long time reading his letters. At last he threw me a long yellow envelope, postmarked New York.

“Read it,” said Doby. “Sequel of that cow case.”

“I don't want to. What's in it?”

“They've dropped me. Three-fourths of my income.”

CHAPTER XV

THE PRICE OF HONEY

WITH my own housekeeping well launched, my visits to Doby's house became infrequent. The earliest rule of conduct that my good father had impressed upon me as a boy was this: If anything pleases you too well, cut it off. If thy right eye give thee delight, pluck it out. The measure of the eagerness with which my face turned toward Doby's house, looming up grey and massive among the trees, was the measure of my wisdom in remaining steadfastly on my own premises.

I was not, however, permitted long to devote myself to the cultivation of wisdom. Lucile sent Doby one evening with instructions to bring me back, dead or alive. I was brought back alive, and listened penitently to a severe scolding. When I departed I had engaged myself to take tea with Lucile and Catharine the next afternoon. Nobody had returned to town yet, said Lucile, and after all she and Catharine had done for me I was not justified in abandoning them to quarrel with each other. So I agreed to call for an hour each day, until something better turned up for them. As a fact, the hour always lengthened itself to two or three. For whatever the time set, Lucile was

at least an hour late, and I had to fill up the time imparting solid information to the unfortunate Catharine.

All that solid information was, of course, bound to bear bitter fruit. One day when I called, I was so unlucky as to stumble upon my old friend the alligator in an unfed condition. "I'm glad to meet you again, at last, Sir Oracle," he growled. "I'm hoping to acquire a little knowledge myself. Whenever I utter a statement, nowadays, Catharine is sure to say, 'No, Grandfather, that isn't right at all. Mr. Gresham says so and so.'"

A chill entered my soul. Here was I, exposed to this voracious patron of the University, and Lucile would not appear for at least an hour. Why under the sun did she have to be late, always? No doubt, she was retouching her beauty a bit, but what was the need? She would have been charming beyond any ordinary person's appreciation, anyway. And now Catharine slipped away too.

Mr. Allen had paused for my reply. None forthcoming, he recast his plan of attack on me.

"When we had an old professor of philosophy at the University, he was under the delusion that he could learn something from me. Now we have a young one, I am to be taught by him at second hand! I propose, sir, to enroll myself as a student in your classes, so that I may not die without having seen the true light."

“Your presence in my class I should regard as a great honour, sir. As for all the miscellaneous information I inflict upon Catharine—well, I have to talk to her about something. On what else would you have me make conversation?”

“Young man, when I was your age I didn’t throw learned rubbish at the head of a superb girl like Catharine. I talked love, sir.”

“Yes, sir, but if I presumed to talk love to Catharine, what would you be likely to do to me?”

“I’d kick you out of the University, sir!” roared the old man. “I’d hound you out of the State of Texas!”

“With your permission, then, sir, I’ll continue to talk learned rubbish.”

“You haven’t my permission, sir,” shouted Mr. Allen. “It’s not a good thing for a young girl to have her head crammed full of things that never will do her any good. It makes her impertinent. It makes her cold, sir.”

Thank Heaven, Lucile was arriving. Catharine had achieved the impossible; she had cut down Lucile’s delay to ten minutes. Another ten minutes, and I suppose I should have been ordered out of the state. Mr. Allen kept his eye fixed on me, but after an hour he arose and departed in disgust, not having had a single chance to bite me.

"Has he been very terrible?" asked Lucile sympathetically.

"Yes."

"Hereafter we'll hang out a danger signal when he's here. Or scatter little bombs on the path by the creek.—Oh yes, I nearly forgot. You are so lonely over there, you ought to have some live things around you. I can't let you have cows or pigs or chickens. You'd get absorbed in your philosophy, and the poor things would starve to death. But you can keep bees."

"Bees!" I exclaimed. "I don't know a thing about bees except that they sting you when you haven't any other troubles."

"You don't need to know anything about them," said Lucile. "You just put the hives down, and they take care of themselves."

"All right, then, I'll think about it."

"That isn't necessary. Josie told me that old Mis' Hopkins is moving to town and wants to dispose of her bees. So I sent her word you would take ten hives. We'll all drive over in the surrey, tomorrow night, and Wesley can follow us with the mule wagon, to bring the hives home. Bees don't sting at night, you know. And the moon is just glorious, these nights. It will be a great lark, you'll see."

When I told Wesley what we were going to do, he became rebellious. "What do we want fohty thousan'

bees foh, stingin' us whenever we tuhn ou' haid? Mis' Arbuthnot am suhtainly mistaken if she say dey don' sting at night. Once when Ah was robbin' dem at night mah smoker went out on me. Well, sah, dey like to killed me."

"It's no use talking, Wesley. Mrs. Arbuthnot says we're going after bees tonight; so we're going."

"All right, sah," said Wesley with a sigh.

Going after the bees was indeed a great lark. Old Mis' Hopkins lived out in the country, a distance of five or six miles, if you took the road across Colonel Thomas's cotton field and forded Lobo Creek; ten miles if you went around by the county road. We took the short road, of course, as it was much more fun to skim across a vast sea of cotton, now just beginning to show open bolls, to wind about among the post oaks in the Colonel's big pasture, and pick a practicable way down the rocky banks of Lobo Creek. "Do be careful, Doby," admonished Lucile from time to time. "Do whip up the horses a little," urged Catharine. "The bees are early risers and we have to get home before dawn."

It was not very late when we reached Mis' Hopkins's house. There was no sign of the owner's presence; we'd have to find the hives ourselves, Lucile said. We picked our way about among the rose clumps and rubbish heaps, and at last discovered a small enclosure,

hedged in with chapparal. Here were dozens of square hives of varying heights and calibers.

“Now, the question is, which hives to take?” said Doby reflectively.

“What difference does it make?” I inquired.

“You don’t want an old hive that’s nearly dead,” said Doby. “You want a young one with lots of healthy bees.”

“Mr. Willis, the bee man, just takes the top off and looks in,” said Catharine. “Sometimes he puts his hand in and feels of the bees.”

“That’s too heroic a method for me,” I objected.

“Well, you can take the tops off and look in and quickly close them down again before the bees wake up. See,” and she wrenched the top off a tall hive. “Oh! Lots of bees here. We’ll take this one, Wesley.”

There was a deep humming in the hive, and bees began to shoot about in the darkness. Excited over the investigation, Catharine ran from hive to hive wrenching off the tops, accepting this one, rejecting that. Angry bees seeking the enemy were constantly increasing in number.

“Oh, Lordy!” yelled Wesley. “Hit got me dat time! Mistah Gresham, won’t you please ask Miss Catharine to leave dem hives alone? If dey sting dem mules, dey’s sure goin’ to be a kitastrophe.”

“Help, help!” shrieked Lucile. Doby rushed to her

defence. "Oh thunder!" he ejaculated. "Those bees are certainly stinging hard tonight."

"That shows I've found the young and vigorous ones," called Catharine, from the centre of a group of raging hives. "Mr. Willis says the harder they sting the better the bees."

"Oh, Catharine," I entreated, "do let us fly. You've already found bees plenty good enough for me."

Catharine laughed. "I don't see why you all mind a little thing like a few stings. I've got three or four myself."

"Catharine," called Lucile, "you come right away from those bees, and let Mr. Gresham get out of danger."

Catharine obeyed reluctantly, and we rejoined the rest of the party in the dense shade of the trees, where Doby was trying to disentangle a bee caught in Lucile's hair.

"Dreadful child!" scolded Lucile. "We'll all be so swelled up we won't be fit to be seen for a week."

"We're all served alike, so it doesn't matter," said Catharine calmly. "My nose seems to be doubling in size every five minutes."

"Horrible!" exclaimed Lucile. "A child of mine should have too much pride in her beauty to let herself be stung on the nose."

"Take my advice, Gresham," said Doby. "Next

time you come after bees, don't take a lot of women along."

"Your advice is worthless, Father," said Catharine. "Mr. Gresham didn't take us. He was taken."

"I'd amend my advice then, but here's a bee has got under my collar, and is looking for thin hide. Gresham, you try to knock me down, right there, between the shoulders."

At length we had reconquered peace under our tree. The bees shooting about in the moonlight were growing more sparse. "Reckon we'd better get them into the wagon," said Doby. "If we don't hurry, it will be morning before we get them home."

"Ah ain't goin' to tech dem bees, sah," declared Wesley.

"What are you talking about, nigger?" Doby demanded. "You shut your mouth and do as you're told, or you'll feel something worse than bee stings."

"Yes, sah," said Wesley humbly.

We got from the wagon some big pieces of mosquito bar, laid them on the ground beside the hives, and lifted the hives upon them. Then we wrapped the bar over the hives and tied it up as well as we could. Big black bunches of the bees came out of the hives and crawled about on the mosquito bar, buzzing fiercely, searching for an exit. Wesley worked faithfully, but he was trembling with fear, and every time a stray bee

hit him in its flight, he groaned. The hives barred up, we transferred them to the wagon. Now we were ready to start for home. We put Wesley in the lead with the bees, and proceeded very slowly and cautiously along the county road.

Presently the wagon ahead bumped against a rock. There was an agonised shriek from Wesley and the wagon came to a standstill. Wesley leaped from his seat and ran for the woods.

“Hey, you nigger!” shouted Doby. “Stop or I’ll shoot.”

Wesley stooped over and increased his speed.

“No catching that nigger now,” said Doby. “I reckon I’d better drive the mule wagon, and leave you to take care of Lucile and Catharine.”

“No, I’ll drive the mule wagon,” I said, jumping from the carriage.

“Mr. Gresham prefers the bees,” said Catharine.

“No wonder,” grumbled Doby.

There was nothing so very pleasant about the prospect of driving that mule wagon. Every bee in the ten hives was awake and very angry, and giving voice to her feelings. I was not at all certain that mosquito bar would hold bees. This was no time for speculation, however. I got into the wagon, drew up the reins and ordered the mules to proceed. My plan was to drive very slowly until the bees were lulled to

sleep. The mules' plan was different. They were on the home road now, and saw no reason for dilatoriness. I tried to hold them back but their mouths were steel. Little by little we were getting up speed. The wheel struck a rock, and the buzzing of the bees became almost a roar. "Would I were a negro, so I could take to the woods," I thought. Our speed increased. The wheel struck another rock. Bump! A hive had gone overboard. The mules stopped short.

"O mules, go on, for Heaven's sake!" I entreated. The mules wouldn't budge. They realised that something had gone overboard. It had to be picked up. What Doby called the mules' New England conscience was at work.

"Any trouble there?" shouted Doby from the rear.

"Yes, a peck of it!" I called, in a ghastly endeavour to be facetious.

Just then an idea seemed to strike the mules,—and the same kind of idea struck me. The mules first stood up on their hind legs, and then darted down the road. Bump! bump! another hive overboard. Bump! another, thank Heaven. Bump! and then, woe me, the rest of the hives tipped over in the wagon and proceeded quietly to batter themselves to pieces. The mosquito bar no longer held; the air filled itself with bees. They were too angry to use discrimination; each flew straight ahead, intending to sting the first thing she encountered.

In terms of physics, the bee pressure was equal in all directions. It was a nice question with me whether the mules or I got the more of them. The mules presented a bigger surface, but I was nearer. On we went. The supply of bees began to be exhausted. At last only occasional stings, and even these were discontinued before we dashed down the lane to Doby's house.

The mules stopped, panting and snorting. I climbed stiffly out of the wagon and sat me down on a rock, telling over to myself, very softly, all the oaths I had ever heard or read. In half an hour Doby drove up, his horses panting.

"Are you hurt, Gresham?" he asked in a voice of deep concern.

"No," I answered feebly. "But I feel as though I were."

"I owe you a hundred apologies. I never should have let you take those mules. Nobody can hold them, once they get started."

"It was all my fault, Mr. Gresham," said Catharine penitently. "If I had let the hives alone it wouldn't have happened. Peter, bring the lantern."

Peter held the lantern close to my face. "My!" ejaculated Catharine. "Indeed, I'm awfully sorry!" And she began to laugh.

"Shame on you, Catharine," said Doby sternly. "Stop that this instant!"

But Catharine couldn't stop, and ran to the house. Peal upon peal, her laughter entered my ears, already bruised and swollen. Doubtless she had good reason to laugh, but the reason could not be expected to be evident to me, just then. I rose from the rock and trudged away to my house, telling all those oaths over again to myself, more fervently.

CHAPTER XVI

THE CHAIN GANG

THE next morning I sat in my living room, with a great bowl of salt water on my table, nursing my wounds and reading Bergson's *Creative Evolution*. As every one knows, you can't get much out of that book unless you have three eyes, and I had only one in working condition, and that one more or less inflamed. All that the reading afforded me was vexation, but vexation was food to me that morning.

"Oh, Mr. Gresham," called a voice from the road.

I looked cautiously through the window. Catharine was at my gate, mounted on a very impatient mustang. It was a detestable horse to ride—I had tried it—one of those uncivilised Mexican horses that don't buck or otherwise behave picturesquely, but have all sorts of unexpected movements that disturb your equilibrium and make you ridiculous.

"Good morning," I answered in the politest tone I could muster.

"I can hear that you are angry still," said Catharine. "Are you as angry as you were last night?"

"Not quite. But my mood is far from pleasant."

"That's too bad. Mother wants you to dine with us this evening."

"I couldn't possibly. I haven't stopped swelling."

Catharine laughed. "Do come out and let me see you."

"No, not for a world! Do go home: my wrath is rising again."

Catharine laughed gaily. "I never can excuse myself satisfactorily for laughing at you last night. If I could have got a photograph of you, I should hold it over you, until you were forced to forgive me."

"Blackmail!" I exclaimed.

"Blackmail is sometimes useful.—You really won't come?"

"I couldn't possibly. Please make up a polite excuse for me; I haven't the least bit of politeness left in me."

"All right, I will," said Catharine cheerfully. "Anyway, it will relieve Mother. She's got a great swelling on her chin, and nothing she can think of reduces it one bit. What are you using?"

"Salt water."

"Oh, that doesn't do any good, does it?"

"Not a bit. But it smarts. That's some comfort."

"I'll recommend it to Mother." And Catharine trotted away. I returned to my *Creative Evolution*. It was still more unintelligible now. If I had remained at the University Hotel, I grumbled to myself, what a

deal of folly I should have escaped. The sum total of my summer's winnings consisted in the bee-stings, still inflaming my face, and Catharine's laughter, inflaming my soul. In a week my lectures would have to begin, and nothing in my head from which to produce them.

There is profit in everything: my bee-stings procured me perfect leisure for a few days. Demosthenes shaved one side of his face to preserve his time from social encroachments: I should be able to shave neither side for a week. Accordingly, I attacked the problem of constructing my courses, and laid down specifications for learned discourses that it would have taken years and years to execute.

Every evening Doby came in and smoked a cigar with me, and urged me to accompany him to his home. What difference did my looks make, anyway? Lucile wouldn't care what I looked like, and neither would Catharine. Doby's reassuring was well meant, but he overdid it. Of course they didn't care. But I did. As every one knows, it is when you have no reason at all to be concerned about your looks that they give you most concern.

The end of the week came at last, and my vacation was over. There were formal opening functions like those of any other college. There was a preliminary faculty meeting in which matters of no moment were debated with great heat, and then class work began. I

found myself possessed of half a dozen classes, mostly consisting of three or four students. One of my classes, however, devoted to a survey of "General Mental and Moral Science," contained forty young men and as many young women. The latter were banked on a gallery at the end of the room—a blinding illumination of beauty to a professor clearing his throat for his very first lecture.

I began with a most commonplace observation. Down it went into eighty notebooks. My next utterance I delivered so rapidly that I hoped they would not be able to get it. They did, but a look of pain passed over the eighty faces. "Would you please repeat that, Professor?" requested a conscientious voice from the gallery. I could not have repeated it for my life. I repeated something, however, and a look of deep perplexity brooded over the class; the revised statement did not harmonise with the original version—eighty erasures had to be made. I paused—out of consideration for the class, they supposed—but in reality to speculate foolishly upon what I should do if I were stricken dumb. I produced another statement. As soon as it was gone from me, I knew it was untenable. But it was down in black and white, in eighty notebooks. My next statement was in flat contradiction to it; down it went also. I paused, and wiped the perspiration from my brow. My next sentence was a marvel of its kind:

it had several beginnings, and several endings, with no middle at all. But those eighty notebooks got it down. That sentence however, had exhausted me: I had plenty of words left in stock, but not a single sentence could I lay my hands on. The class waited, their pens poised.

“Ladies and gentlemen,” I said, “this lecture is now concluded. I am quite too embarrassed to proceed further.” Down went a memorandum in eighty books. The members of the class closed their notebooks and filed out, as unconcernedly as though it were the most natural thing in the world for a lecturer to tell the truth.

The file of students had passed through the door, and the room was empty. No, not quite: my eyes fell upon two figures in white on the balcony. Lucile and Catharine. Ye gods, wasn't it enough for me to be whipped, without having it done in sight of my friends? My first impulse was to fly and explain afterwards. Or perhaps pack my trunks and slip away to New York without ever making any explanations. But Lucile and Catharine were descending from the gallery.

“That was a poor piece of acting, Mr. Gresham,” said Lucile. “You weren't embarrassed one bit, you just wanted to cheat us out of a lecture.”

“You're very charitable, Lucile.”

“Not a bit of it. I'm going to have President Brett dock you a day's pay. Come on: you'll have to ride

home with us: we're afraid of all those horrid convicts on the road."

The road that ran by my house had always been in wretched condition. In summer it was usually six inches deep in dust, in winter a foot deep in mud. The city had at last decided to improve the road, and the contractor had a gang of fifty or sixty convicts on it. A majority of them were negroes, a third Mexicans, and there was a sprinkling of whites. It was rather hard to identify the whites as they had been baked brown in the sun of the Texas roads, and the dust had powdered the hair of all the races until it was a uniform grey mass, felted down by perspiration. Black, red and white, all had the same expression of fierce despair, and directed the same bloodshot glances toward the guards, who stood leaning on their rifles at either end of the line, or toward inquisitive passersby who stopped to watch them. Each man wore an iron that looked like the head of a pick-ax, riveted on his leg just below the knee, its spurs extending a foot ahead and a foot behind the leg. How heavy it was I don't know, but the convicts dragged their legs rather painfully at nightfall, when they were marched in single file down to the camp on the stream, a quarter of a mile below Doby's house. Doby felt a little uneasy over their presence, though not sufficiently uneasy to put locks on his doors.

I wondered sometimes what crimes they had committed to merit punishment like this. I had tried to engage the guards in conversation, but got very short and surly replies. Plainly, they knew nothing about it: they accepted the chain gang as an established institution. They received their pay for keeping the men moving, and for shooting those who made a break for liberty. That was all they knew or cared to know. I had tried to get some information out of Doby, but he was unwilling to indulge in conjectures as to the probable crimes of the men worked under the system. Abandoned criminals he thought they were, and they looked like it. Doby was not wholly averse to the system; nor, I confess, was I. The men worked harder than any other men I saw working in Texas, and they were building a stretch of road that greatly improved both Doby's property and mine.

However desperate the convicts might be, there was not the slightest danger to persons driving by them on the road. I knew very well that Lucile had invented for me the rôle of protector out of kindness of heart. It is a salutary pose for one who has just been subjected to a moral defeat. I was under no illusions as to the opinions Lucile and Catharine must have formed of me; but they were so cheerful and entertaining I had no time for self-flagellation. I had forgotten myself and the convicts, too, by the time we drove past the first

guard, erect and vigilant, at the edge of the road. In a crooked line extending some fifty yards were the convicts, bent to their work of pick and shovel.

"Isn't it horrible?" asked Lucile. "It makes me shiver to see them. Poor fellows! To think of treating human beings in this way!"

"You have to think of their crimes, too," I suggested.

"I'd set them all free," said Catharine. "I'd give them another chance."

A convict straightened himself up and glared at us.

"Drive faster, Peter," said Lucile in a sort of terror. Catharine threw the convict a rose from her belt as we passed him.

"Silly child!" exclaimed Lucile. "He looks like a murderer. Doesn't he, Mr. Gresham?"

"He certainly does," I agreed, annoyed by Catharine's sentimentalism. "But there is no crime that a fair lady will not cover with roses."

"The college is *your* chain gang," said Catharine, glancing at me angrily. "Mamma and I threw *you* a rose. It made *you* feel a lot better. Maybe this poor fellow isn't so bad as he looks. And if he is, it won't hurt to make him feel a little better."

"Catharine," said Lucile severely, "I'm disgusted with you. You will offer an apology at once."

"No, she won't," I said, affecting indifference. "Her

analogy is a perfectly good one. Only, these irons look lighter than mine.—If you'll excuse me, I won't ride any farther: I want to stop and see a little more of my colleagues here. Peter, please let me get out."

Peter drew up the reins. "I never saw anything so silly," stormed Lucile as the carriage started up again. "Catharine was impertinent, but what difference does that make to you?"

An enormous difference, I thought, as I pursued my way on foot. In comparison, the memory of my absurd defeat as a lecturer was nothing at all. It would be many a day, I resolved, before my feet would know the path to Doby's house.

Vain resolution! Late that night I heard shots down the stream in the direction of the convict camp. There wasn't one chance in a hundred that anything serious had happened, but I dressed myself, got my pistol from the mantel and hurried over to Doby's house. I found Doby in his living-room, smoking. A rifle rested across the arms of a chair, and on its plush seat lay two revolvers.

"Glad you've come, Gresham," said Doby, offering me a cigar. "It probably isn't anything, but sometimes these convict disturbances are pretty serious."

"Good evening, Mr. Gresham." It was Catharine,

in a loose gown of blue silk, her hair in a yellow cataract over her back and shoulders. She seated herself opposite Doby and me, and listened.

There was a sound of shouting. "They're coming up the branch," said Doby. "Those convicts always follow the water, if they can, so the dogs can't track them."

There was more shouting, quite near at hand, then a succession of shots. Catharine gazed silently at Doby, who bent his head forward, listening intently.

"I reckon they got him," said Doby.

"What did you hear, Father?" demanded Catharine, turning pale.

"I didn't hear anything," asserted Doby. "Go off to bed now, baby. They're going back."

But Catharine refused to go. For hours we sat listening. From time to time Doby made a remark, apropos of nothing, and I attempted occasionally to get a conversation under way. Catharine said nothing. She sat back in her chair, her face turned toward a window, listening. There was no sound but that of the crickets and locusts in the trees, and the occasional "Gr...umph!" of a bull frog in the stream. How many thousands of American girls, in lonely cabins on the frontiers, have thus sat listening out the night? And how many thousands of American men, watching their pale, quiet faces, have learned lessons in emotion

that are not taught at all in our well policed civilisation?

At break of day Doby and I went down to the camp to see what had happened. One man, a Mexican, had tried to escape, but the guards had got him. The convicts were still stretched in sleep in a long row, under the oak trees. They slept restlessly, shifting their heads about, alternately drawing their legs up and extending them. At a little distance from the rest lay one, flat on his back, sleeping very well. He was the man who had broken for liberty.

CHAPTER XVII

THE PESTS

ALMOST every one has at least once in his life encountered the grisly monster, stage fright. If you repel him by force of resolution, he returns again and again to terrorise you. His persistence is unexampled. But if you let him overcome you, tread you underfoot, wreak his will upon you, he loses interest in you completely. After my first sad lecture, I would have made nothing of pronouncing inanities before an audience of kings, if the kings could have endured the ordeal.

There is after all no very complicated mystery in the college lecturer's art, except perhaps that there should be a living in it. Literary form, brilliancy of exposition are not required of the college lecturer; indeed, these qualities, if ever they appear, are likely to be resented as an impertinence. They destroy the illusion of bold thought struggling mightily to surmount the spike-crowned barriers of reality. The lecturer who hesitates and stutters, abandons sentences half-completed, warps well-known words out of all plausible signification or extemporises stupefying new ones, appears evidently to be engaged at dramatically close quarters with truth and error.

Least of all is the teacher's art a mystery in a courteous state like Texas. Only a touching faith could have enabled any one to see anything of value in the general observations I was delivering on Mental and Moral Science. There really must have been doubt in the hearts of my students as to the expediency of attending such lectures as I was giving. But there never appeared any doubt on their faces. The students were for the most part old Southern types, with soft, drawling voices, and manners the cumulation of generations of good breeding. The boys were as a rule rather lean and wiry, with tawny skin and deep-set eyes. The girls were generally characterised by languor and bronzed pallor. Most of the students worked earnestly, but accomplished little. College instruction has not yet been properly adapted to Texas. The time will come when clear-eyed philosophers will stroll about with their disciples in sacred groves, and philosophy will thrive wonderfully. For the present it languishes.

The gentle types of the old South are, however, not the only ones represented in the University of Asuncion. After the work had been running smoothly for a week or more, there appeared in a corner of the room four men with the dress and manners of cheap desperadoes. They entered late, with noise enough for a regiment, threw themselves into their seats with such abandon that the wood creaked audibly, and flung their hats

against the wall twenty feet away. They talked to one another in undertones, cocked their eyes at me, chuckled from time to time, and otherwise rendered their presence as obnoxious as possible.

When I received their registration cards, I set out to learn from my colleagues what kind of men these were. I found that they had long infested the campus, and were popularly known as "the Pests." Their presence in any course, I was assured, diminished its efficiency fifty per cent: if they did not utterly wreck it, that was because they were usually absent about half the time. Doubtless they had picked me out, it was suggested, as an easy prey. I was advised to keep my eye out for trouble. This I promised to do, although it was difficult to see what good that would do me.

The ringleader of the Pests was generally known as Chig, and hailed from the Rio Grande country. He was hook-nosed and eagle-eyed, and I should have picked him out as an interesting man to meet, outside of the class room. He never started any trouble himself, but lent his moral support to the real troublemaker of the gang, who was known as Pug, an outrageously saucy young fellow whose face had no nose worth mentioning to relieve its broad, flabby expanse. The third member of the group bore the name of Barker, and had come down from Kansas as a "lunger," but was now quite robust in health. Barker was an angular, long-necked

person, excessively given to snickering. His attitude toward the University, its faculty and students, was indicated by his supercilious air, which seemed to say: "Oh, what a cheap, wretched little college. You ought to see the colleges we have in Kansas." The fourth was named McGillicuddy. He was a stocky man of about forty, with ragged hair and stubbly face. Where he came from, what he had done with his life, why he was attending lectures at the college, nobody knew. The only thing that I had against him was that he always laughed noisily at Pug's antics and Barker's sneers.

One day I was lecturing quite inoffensively when up went Pug's hand. "Ah didn't catch what you said just then, Puhfess."

I repeated my statement.

"Ah don't believe a wold of it," said Pug.

"Well, please repeat what I said and state your objections," I suggested.

"Couldn't do it," said Pug. "Ain't no sense in it."

"Ye don't hear such rotten dope as that in the University of Kansas," said Barker shrilly.

Whereupon the Pests began to laugh uproariously.

A slender, black-haired boy in the middle of the room rose.

"Professoh Gresham, if you will kindly ask the ladies

to retiah, we will put those gentlemen out." The Pests applauded gleefully.

"There is nothing that could give me greater pleasure," I replied, "but I fear that it would occasion too much of a scandal."

"We have an excellent precedent, suh," said the black-haired boy. "We threw them out of the English class last yeah."

At this the ladies all rose and filed demurely down the balcony steps and out into the hall. Whether any of them desired to see the affray one could not tell from their expression. Indeed, there was no indication on their faces that an affray was impending.

As the last lady closed the door, it began. The Pests backed into a corner and defended themselves heroically, four against forty, for I was the only impartial spectator in the room. In a quarter of an hour they had succumbed, and were being dragged down the hall. I followed and saw them thrown down the stone steps leading from the main entrance. I waited to see if they were hurt, but evidently they were used to this kind of treatment. They sprang up, dusted themselves off a bit, uttered a war whoop and set out for town. I returned to the lecture room and took an inventory of the losses on our side. Two chairs had been smashed, a picture of Sam Houston had been broken over somebody's head, and about a square yard

of plastering had been knocked off. This was the extent of the property damage. The sum of the personal damages was a broken finger and some bruises and scratches, widely distributed among the men.

“Now, Professoh,” said my black-haired general, adjusting his collar, “Ah move you, suh, that you appoint a committee to wait on the ladies to apprise them of the fact that ohdah has been restoahed, in ohdah that the lectuah may continue.”

The next day I received a note from the President's office requesting me to call.

The President provided me with a suitable Mexican cigar. “I understand, sir,” he said, “you had a little fracas in your classroom yesterday.”

“Yes, Mr. President; I am sorry you weren't there to see it.”

“Don't you think, Professor Gresham, that you could manage next time to have them waylaid somewhere off the campus?”

“The idea hadn't occurred to me, but it seems a good one.”

“I hope you'll try it,” said the President. “For my own part, I have only one fault to find with the performance of yesterday: it was not sufficiently effective. But one of your tender-hearted colleagues felt moved to consult Mr. Allen about it.”

“And what is Mr. Allen going to do with me?”

“ Mr. Allen suggested that your influence on the college is probably bad; he knows that you exert a very pernicious influence upon Doby.”

“ Does this mean, Mr. President, that you are demanding my resignation? ”

“ No. Mr. Allen changed his mind later.”

“ What made him do that? ”

“ Lucile.”

Tenure by apron strings. Surely, something rather new in the academic world.

CHAPTER XVIII

A PLUNGE INTO CRIME

THE first norther had come, sweeping all the dust from the roads and all traces of cloud from the sky. I returned early one night from the Utriusque Club, leaving Doby to finish out the evening with Mr. Marshall at Pergolino's Garden. They had urged me to go with them, but I had no taste for it. Anyway, the night was so cold it would have been impossible to sit out under the fig tree or in the pavilion. All there was to do was to settle oneself in Pergolino's winter dining room and watch Professor Sciarli put through some new trick. It was poor entertainment, and Elena never appeared in that room at all.

There was no moon that night, and the stars, brilliant as they were, afforded barely enough light for one to pick out sound footing between the ruts of the road. The trees along the stream seemed weirdly big, waving their black branches in the cold wind. A ray of light from the servants' rooms lit up the posts of my gate and the path to the house. A cheery light it was, and still more cheery was the big fire of cedar logs Wesley had kindled in my hearth. I drew my chair up to the fragrant fire and fell into a pleasant doze.

Did I hear shooting? I rubbed my eyes and listened. I couldn't have heard it: the wind was howling about my eaves in a way that would make any sound uncertain. Besides, I had not got entirely out of the habit of hearing shots when I was half awake. It was not easy to get rid of the impressions of that night at Doby's when the convict had tried to escape. Evidently this was just another reminiscence. I settled back in my chair to enjoy the fire again.

There was a rap at the door. "Mr. Gresham!" called Catharine's voice. I sprang to the door.

"Why, Catharine!" I exclaimed.

"Come," said Catharine in a tone of repressed excitement. "There's trouble in the camp, and Father's not at home."

I snatched my pistol from the mantel shelf, and hurried around the house after Catharine, who was already groping her way down the steps to the terrace.

"You should never have come alone, Catharine, on such a night as this," I expostulated, as she put her hand on my arm.

"Mother was nearly frightened to death. So I had to come."

"Why didn't you send Peter or William?"

"Do you suppose I could get one of the negroes to leave the house? No, indeed; they're hiding in the cellar."

“Hiding from what?”

“The posse. It’s so dark they’d be likely to shoot at anything that stirs.”

“A pretty time for you to be out,” I grumbled.

“Oh, well, it was probably a false alarm, anyway. What’s that moving down in those willows?”

“Nothing,” I replied. “Come on.”

“I think it’s a man,” said Catharine, stubbornly resisting my efforts to draw her along.

“I don’t care if it is,” I said impatiently. “This is none of our hunt. Let us go on.”

“I’m not going to stir until I see what it is,” insisted Catharine. And she stepped toward the willows on the water’s edge, tugging at my arm.

“Catharine,” I said, “don’t be foolish. There’s nobody there. And if there were, I have no intention of mixing up with him. This is an affair for the guards.”

“Are you afraid?” demanded Catharine.

“Of course I am,” I replied impatiently. “I don’t want to be shot at, even in this darkness, and I haven’t any right to let you get into danger.”

“You said it was nothing,” persisted Catharine. “I’m sure I heard something there, and I’m going to see what it is.”

After all, there was no reason whatever for supposing that any one was concealed in those willows. And it

was better to satisfy Catharine's curiosity than to waste more time. "You stay here," I said, "and I'll investigate."

"No, indeed," said Catharine. "I'm going along." We pushed our way through the tall grass to the willow clump at the edge of the stream. Something seemed to stir.

"Hullo!" I exclaimed, drawing the pistol from my pocket. "Who the deuce are you?"

No reply.

"Tell me who you are, or I'll shoot."

There was a rustling in the bushes, and the sound of a footstep in the water. A man's figure rose from the stream before me.

"I am pore Norwegian sailor man," said a husky voice. "If dey catch me, dey kill me."

"What did you do?" asked Catharine. "Did you kill somebody?"

"No. I do nodding. But dey vill kill me."

"Catharine," I said, "he's probably lying. They don't get into the chain gang for nothing. But it isn't our quarrel. Sailor man, you'd better run for it. I hear the dogs down the stream."

"I can no run more," said the man despairingly. "De iron, it catch and I fall. Dey kill me."

"We'll help you," said Catharine. "We could hide him in your house, Mr. Gresham."

“No, indeed,” I replied decisively. “Conceal an escaped convict? It’s a penal offence. I’d be on the chain gang myself.”

“They will surely kill him,” urged Catharine. “We *must* do it.” She turned to the convict. “If you’ll follow up the stream a little way, you’ll come to a house on the right bank. It belongs to this gentleman. We’ll hide you in the cellar until the posse goes by.”

“Catharine,” I protested, “you don’t realise what you are doing. This is a crime.”

“Oh, come on!” said Catharine impatiently. “They’ll get him if we don’t hurry.” The man was already splashing up the stream, and we followed after on the path.

“This is the place,” called Catharine as we ascended the terrace at my cellar door. The convict paused in midstream.

“We’ll have to carry him into the cellar, or the dogs may get the scent,” said Catharine. “You get him by the shoulders and I’ll carry his feet.”

“No, I can carry him, if I must,” I grumbled. I went down to the edge of the stream. “Get on my back,” I said. The convict put his arms, all cold with dew and sweat, round my neck and threw his weight upon my back. I staggered a little, but I found I could carry him. He was a big man, but fortunately,

had little flesh on him. I toiled up the bank with my load, the iron spurs on his leg beating my shins painfully. "I've opened the door," called Catharine from the blackness of the tunnel. I carried my burden into the farther end of the cellar and deposited him on a pile of rubbish.

"Can you find anything to block the door with?" asked Catharine's voice, close beside me.

I felt around on the floor with my feet until I kicked against a board which seemed to be loose. I picked it up and braced the door with it, and led Catharine up the stairs to the living-room. As we emerged into the light I saw that my clothes were all covered with mud and cobwebs.

"I must change my clothes," I said. "Then we'll hurry over to your house." I ran to my room and donned another suit. My soiled clothes I thrust into a drawer in my desk and covered them with lecture notes. For they were evidence of complicity in a crime.

"Come, let us go," I said as I re-entered the living-room. "Why Catharine, what have you done with your coat?"

"We can't go yet," said Catharine calmly, seating herself by the fire. "The hunt is very near. Can't you hear the dogs?"

"I suppose they'll search the house," I said gloomily. "They'll get the convict, and me too."

“No, they won’t,” affirmed Catharine. She rose from her chair and walked around the room, surveying its decorations critically. “That picture doesn’t hang right. Let us change it.”

“Bother the picture,” I said impatiently. “What I don’t like is the way I’ll hang if that mob goes through this house.”

“This may be your last chance to put the picture where it belongs,” laughed Catharine. “I could do it myself if I had a step-ladder.”

“Since it troubles you so much,” I said with irritation, “we’ll attend to it now.” I pushed a table against the wall and mounted upon it. “Now tell me where it ought to be.”

“That’s too low,” said Catharine. “Too high now. Just a trifle lower—no, not so much. There! Hold it there a moment until I see.” She stepped back to the fireplace and surveyed the picture critically. The frame was very heavy and my arms were growing impatient.

There was a heavy knock at the door. “Come in!” cried Catharine. Before I could get the picture off my hands and descend to the floor, the door opened and a tall man in a broad-brimmed hat entered. In the court I saw groups of men with rifles on their shoulders crossing and recrossing the path of light from the open door.

“ Ah beg yo’ pahdon, suh,” said the tall man, removing the rifle from his shoulder and resting the stock on the seat of a chair. “ One of the boys down to the camp has done got away, and we think he followed up the branch. You ain’t seen nothing of him? ”

“ No,” I replied.

“ Yo’ lady ain’t seen nothing neither? ” He pulled off his hat and nodded at Catharine.

“ No,” said Catharine. “ But I thought I heard something go splashing up the creek, and I said to my husband: ‘ Edward, there’s surely one of Mr. Arbuthnot’s mules getting away again.’ I told the niggers to go out and catch him, but Wesley said, ‘ Mis’ Gresham, dis suhtainly am a man hunt,’ and wouldn’t budge. I didn’t believe it, but the niggers took to the cellar, I reckon they’re there still.” Catharine stepped to the cellar door. “ Wesley! Fanny, Zephrina! ” There was no reply.

“ They suhtainly ah scaihed,” said the man, laughing. “ He went up the crick, you say, lady? ”

“ I’m sure of it,” said Catharine emphatically.

“ He’s gone up the branch, boys,” shouted the man, bowing himself out.

“ What did you think of my acting? ” asked Catharine, raising the top of the window seat to recover her coat.

“ I’m sorry the piece is played out,” I said fervently.

With shame I record it; I had been so much absorbed in Catharine's little comedy that I no longer had the slightest realisation of the seriousness of my action in concealing an escaped convict. And even now, when the play was over, was I not almost purring with satisfaction because a man I had never seen before and would never see again had taken Catharine for my wife, and because she had accepted the rôle so readily? I really should have had myself inoculated with this kind of folly ten years before, I grumbled to myself complacently.

"They've all gone by," said Catharine. "We must hurry; I don't know what Mamma will think. But first run down into the cellar and tell him they've gone."

I obeyed. "Sailor man!" I called softly. "They're gone."

There was no reply. I listened for his breathing. It was not audible. Perhaps he was gone, and perhaps he was dead. And perhaps he was standing over me in the darkness. I backed my way to the stairs and made good speed to the living-room. It wasn't heroic, but what's the use in being heroic in such absolute night?

"He's all right," I said. "Let us go."

We found Lucile tearfully relating her despairs to Doby, who had just arrived.

"My darling baby!" she sobbed. "I was just sure you had been killed."

"Foolish Mother," said Catharine indulgently. "You ought to know I can take care of myself."

"What kept you so long, anyway? You should have known what agonies I was suffering."

"I heard the posse coming before I could rouse Mr. Gresham," said Catharine. "Of course we had to wait for it to pass. They were wild enough to shoot at anything they saw."

"Catharine was wise," declared Doby approvingly. "I never saw a more level-headed girl. Did you, Gresham?"

"No," I replied with conviction.

"It's all very well to be level-headed," said Lucile querulously. "But it was I who had to suffer the tortures."

"Mother is hysterical," declared Catharine. "Father, take her to her room and comfort her. I'll light Mr. Gresham out."

"I'll be back in a few minutes, Gresham," said Doby. "Find a cigar."

"Now you must go," said Catharine with determination. "You have to get hold of your negroes and scare them to death, or they'll tell, if the posse comes back."

"I'll try it," I said uncertainly.

"You *must* keep them quiet. Tell them you'll kill them. And don't breathe a word of this to Father. He's a great stickler for law and order."

"I know it," I said. "So am I."

"Yes, but you can be made to listen to reason."

"What I'd like to know is what you want me to do with my convict?"

"Oh, I don't know. You'll have to keep him a few days, and then we'll see."

"Why not turn him loose, now the coast is clear?"

"He may be a desperate character, you know."

"Yes, I believe he is."

"A great many of these convicts are insane, Father says. He says they have just terrible impulses."

"What a pleasant view of the matter to take, now he's saddled upon me."

"That's true," said Catharine reflectively. "I never thought of you at all."

"Of course you didn't. Why should you?"

"I am a very thoughtless person," said Catharine penitently. "It's no wonder you detest me."

"I don't. So far from it, I'm not quite sure I haven't fallen in love with you. Wouldn't that be absurd?"

"No," said Catharine, dropping her eyes. "But now you must go; Father is coming back. Come early tomorrow: you'll have to inquire about Mamma's

health." She gave me her hand, which didn't mean anything, and a glance, which didn't mean anything either, and I went blundering my stupid way home along the dark path, writing in whatever meaning I chose. It is a way with men of belated youth.

CHAPTER XIX

BORROWED TROUBLE

A MAN who is young, either in years or in experience, is almost sure to cherish the belief that to adore a lady who is unattainable is to commit a grave sin against her. A sin for which she will impose the extremest penalties at her command, if ever she finds it out. And when she does find it out and fails—as she usually does—to mete out the expected penalties, the effect upon the sinner is overwhelming. His own individuality is, for the time, quite extinguished: he becomes merely a point in the serene skies from which the world is viewed through a soft, blue haze. The feeling doesn't last; but through its brief term it is, beyond comparison, the most exquisite of earthly experiences.

Although I was inexperienced, I was still not blind. I knew well enough that few women consider their lives absolutely complete without at least one hopeless passion directed toward them; and some must have a constant succession of them for their fullest existence. And I knew, therefore, that a sufficiently modest avowal of even the most hopeless passion can reasonably be expected to yield the reward of a sweet glance or a sad smile. But knowledge gained at second hand confers

no immunity against first-hand folly. I had firmly believed that Catharine would fly into a rage; she hadn't done so, and here I was dreaming before my hearth, whose brightness and warm glow seemed merely a reflection of my own feelings.

The dreaming was delightful; but I had work to do. It was plain that I should have to terrorise Wesley and Fanny Zephrina into silence. They had given no evidence of life from the time that Catharine appeared with the news of the man hunt. But it does not take long for even the most obtuse Northerner to learn that nothing whatever can happen in a house without the knowledge of the negro servants. In the densest darkness the negro seems to see plainly; the thickest walls do not prevent his hearing the lowest voices. And it is decreed that all this accurate knowledge acquired through the negro's sharpened senses shall not lie hidden in his secret mind. He must talk: there is nothing that will keep him from it but fear of death. The problem I had to solve was how to produce that fear. I reflected a good many minutes, and then went through the kitchen and rapped on Wesley's door. Absolute stillness. I rapped again. No sound.

“Wesley!” I called. “You come out of there at once.”

No reply.

I pounded on the door as if to break its panels.

“You fool nigger, what are you afraid of? I’m all alone.” The door opened just a few inches, and Wesley’s face appeared in the opening.

“Wesley,” I said, “one of those convicts got away and I’m hiding him in the cellar. I’m going to keep him there a while, and then turn him loose.”

“Yes, sah.”

“I don’t want you and Fanny Zephрина to be talking about him. Do you hear?”

“Yes, sah.”

“If I hear that you or Fanny Zephрина have said a single word about this affair, I’m going to say that you let him in.”

“Don’ do dat, sah,” pleaded Wesley. “Dey’d suah buhn us.”

“Of course they would. So you keep quiet about it.”

“Yes, sah.”

“That’s all, then, Wesley. We’ll all keep still, and nobody will have any trouble.”

One unpleasant task was performed, anyway. An old Southerner could no doubt have thought of some better way of stopping the negroes’ mouths, but mine, I believed, would answer the purpose. Another unpleasant task lay before me: to investigate the condition of my guest in the cellar. I didn’t like to encounter him.

Of course, I should have every advantage in any conflict, but it was extremely disagreeable to contemplate the probability of an outburst of insane anger directed against me as a representative of law and order. I got a lantern and proceeded into the cellar.

The man was dozing, but as I approached he started up and clutched about for some kind of weapon. I had an absurd feeling of surprise and injury, because he did not recognise me. There was of course no reason why he should. Our earlier encounter had been in almost absolute darkness.

“Don’t get excited,” I said. “I am the man who carried you in here.” Either my voice or my words seemed to reassure him in some measure. He sank back on his rubbish heap and put a hand over his eyes to protect them from the light. His face, now for the first time visible to me, was certainly not such as to reassure me. It seemed to me that not one of the members of the chain gang whom I had observed closely had so much the appearance of abandoned criminal as this man.

“I want to know something about you,” I began.

“None of your beezness!” he snapped, glaring at me suspiciously.

“It is some of my business,” I replied. “This is my house which is sheltering you. I want to know who you are.”

“I am pore Norwegian sailor man,” he said in a monotonous voice.

“You told me that before. What’s your name?”

“I names Jørgen Bjerg.”

“Tell me, what did you do?” I inquired.

“I run away.”

“That isn’t what I mean. Why did they put you in the chain gang?”

“I run away.”

This was mere evasion, it seemed to me at first. Yet he did not have the expression of a man consciously engaged in devising evasions. He had sunk together again, just a heap of abject misery. I decided to continue my inquisition.

“You must have been in the chain gang before you tried to run away.”

“I vas in de quarry.”

I reflected a few moments. I had a vague memory of accounts of quarries worked by convict labour. Perhaps he was telling the truth in the present instance, anyway.

“Why did they put you in the quarry?”

“I not know.”

“You must know,” I said impatiently. “You must have killed somebody, or robbed, or stolen.”

“I not know,” insisted the convict with apparent sincerity.

"Why don't you know?" I demanded.

"De quarry, he blow up. I much, much hurt. See." And he turned the left side of his head to the lantern. There was a scarified area about the size of a man's hand, and just at the roots of his hair an oblong hole that looked almost deep enough to pierce the skull.

"Did that destroy your memory?" I asked in horror.

"I no forstand."

"You don't remember things that happened before the quarry blew up?"

"Some t'ings I remember."

"Do you remember how you got to Texas?"

"I vas sailor man. I go on land in city on island, an' de ship, he sail away."

"That is, you deserted your ship?"

"I not know."

"What did you work at after you landed?"

He shook his head.

"Where did you come from, in Norway?"

"Trondhjem."

"Have you any relatives there?"

"My ole mo'er, she vas alive ven I sail."

"Is she still alive?"

"I not know."

"You can't remember why you killed that man?" I demanded, changing my tactics.

He shook his head. "I no t'ink I kill a man. I not know."

I questioned him a while longer. If his answers were to be accepted at their face value—and he certainly appeared sincere—his memory in general had been pretty thoroughly disintegrated by the injury he had suffered. That the injury was a severe one, my own eyes bore witness; that it might have had the effect of dropping out a considerable part of his memory content, was at least plausible. If he had merely lost the memory of the events leading up to his arrest, I should have been more suspicious. But he had forgotten many things he might safely have remembered; for instance, whether he had ever seen his father or not. And some things he remembered to his disadvantage: as, for example, a vicious attack on a guard in the quarry, prior to the explosion that injured him. On the whole, I concluded that he really did not know what his original crime was, and accordingly it was a nice question how far, under the retributive theory of the criminal law, the state was justified in continuing the exaction of penalties.

"Is there anything you want?" I asked, after some minutes of reflection. The convict was dozing again, and started up at my words.

"Vat?" he asked.

"Do you want anything?" I repeated.

“No.” He sat upright, and changed with his hands the position of his fettered leg.

“It does pain,” he said, apparently to himself.

I held the lantern closer. No doubt it did. Blood was caked on the iron.

“Is there any way to get that thing off?” I asked.

“A rasp,” he answered, making a motion of filing.

I hesitated. Responsible or not, under the law, he certainly looked like a dangerous character, and with the iron off he might go forth to terrorise the community. Still, my own conscience would never permit me to turn him over to the authorities, even if Catharine would consent to my doing so. And it would be merely washing my hands of him to turn him out with the iron on him. He would be retaken within twenty-four hours. I had in my tool-chest a set of files. Wretched little bits of steel for the work at hand, but such as they were, he should have them.

When I returned to the cellar with the files, Jörgen Bjerg was dozing again. No doubt he had lain awake for many nights planning his escape. Nothing else could account for the desperate weariness written upon his face. I roused him and handed him the files. Instantly the weariness was gone from him. He drew up his fettered leg, jerked at it and twisted it, as if it had been a piece of wood, to get it into a good posi-

tion for the work. If it pained him, he did not appear to be conscious of the fact.

“Some water!” he said, turning his eyes upon me for an instant.

I brought him a pitcher of water and retired to my living-room. Scratch, scratch, scratch! sounded the file. Hideous sound! I wondered whether it could be heard on the path by the creek. I went around the house and descended the steps to the terrace. The sound of filing was plainly audible. It would be best for me to take up my station there, in order to warn the convict if any one approached.

No, I'd not be able to get into the house and down into the cellar in time. I returned to the living-room, put out the lights and drew my chair up to the open window overlooking the creek. There I sat until dawn, peering out at the dark forms of the swaying trees and listening to the sounds of the night. There were myriads of them: together they seemed to compose a vast roar, in which how could I possibly distinguish a soft footfall on the path? The whole volume of sound, however, seemed only to bring out more distinctly the rasping of the file in the cellar.

As the night wore on, doubt began to canker my philanthropic enthusiasm. Law and order: by what right had I claimed a superiority to their majestic sway? The State of Texas is a civilised state, and its

laws are mild. If it inflicts penalties upon a man, the chances are strong that he merits them. Here, as in all other jurisdictions, there are doubtless miscarriages of justice: but how valid were my reasons for counting this as one of them? When I first launched myself upon this enterprise, I certainly had no valid reasons at all. Jørgen Bjerg was to me just an ordinary escaped convict when I took him upon my back and hid him from his pursuers. I was acting upon a whim, and not my own whim either, but that of a girl of eighteen. It was no defence to say that I was in love with Catharine: every man of sense knows that he ought to keep his actions free from sentimental influence. And, after all, was I in love with Catharine? I nailed my soul down to the window ledge and dissected it with numb fingers: there was nothing in it that looked like love, not for Catharine, nor for any one or anything else. All there was in it was a yearning for the right to work and sleep in peace.

How much of Jørgen's story was I justified in believing? Just now I refused to believe anything but my senses; and all that they presented to me was cold and weariness, the sound of swaying trees and hooting owls, and loud above all else, the rasp, rasp, rasping of the file in Jørgen's hands.

The long night ended at last. The wind had died down, and the hooting of the owls had given way to

the heartening sound of crowing cocks. The morning twilight is brief in Texas: before I knew it, it was broad day. The rasping had ceased; I did not know when. Probably I had dozed away, although I could not recall a moment when I was not wide-awake. I repaired to the cellar, lantern in hand, to take account of progress. At my approach Jörgen sprang up, a spur of his irons in his hand. He was certainly a dangerous character now.

“Put that thing down!” I commanded. “Are you hungry?”

But Jörgen had dropped in a heap upon the floor and was fast asleep. I returned to the living-room.

“Some coffee, and I’ll feel better over it,” I said to myself. I opened the door to the kitchen. No sign of the negroes. I went through the kitchen and rapped on their door. It was cautiously opened and Wesley appeared.

“You lazy niggers, why aren’t you up getting breakfast?” I demanded.

“We suhtainly am pow’ful scaihed ob dat muhderer,” said Wesley faintly.

“Murderer nothing!” I exclaimed crossly. “He’s as innocent as you are. I want my breakfast immediately.”

“Jedge Gresham,” said Wesley humbly, “Fanny

Zephrina is got a touch ob de fever. Ah reckon Ah'd bettah take huh to huh muddah dis mawnin'."

"Wesley," I said fiercely, "if either of you niggers leaves this place before I tell you to go, I'll send the sheriff after you with the dogs."

In half an hour my breakfast was served. Fanny Zephrina's fingers trembled so much that she dropped the pitcher and spilled the cream. I glared at her until her shaking increased perceptibly. It was an outrage to bully those unhappy negroes, but nothing puts heart into a man like some one to bully. I began to feel rather complacent over my unlawful exploit.

CHAPTER XX

THE MAJESTY OF LAW AND ORDER

As early as the conventions permitted, I called at Doby's house, to make inquiries concerning the health of Lucile. I met Doby at the door, ready to set out for his office.

"Lucile is pretty badly used up," said Doby with concern. "The strain of last night just about broke her down. But she's sleeping now."

"And how is Catharine?"

"Oh, Catharine is up, and seems all right. She is so calm, it rather frightens me. You never can tell when a quiet woman is going to have a nervous crisis. I wish you'd stay around a while and talk to her when she comes down."

"I shall, gladly," I replied with suppressed sincerity.

"I consider that you have a very good influence on Catharine," said Doby generously. "She is more serious, more womanly than she was before you took her in hand. Most young girls don't go much on philosophy, but Catharine seems to take to it. She misses you, I do believe, every time you're too much tied up in your work to come over."

"It gives me great pleasure to hear it," I said, striving desperately to hold the correct perfunctory tone. There was no reason for it, but Doby's words gave me infinite pleasure.

"These young girls don't look it, but they're mighty deep," said Doby reflectively. "There's a young fellow hanging around here a good deal that I don't like. She says she don't like him, either: she'd rather talk philosophy with you. I believe her, but you can't tell; she may be using you as a sort of a blind, you know. That's what these young girls often do."

"Yes, of course," I said, maintaining the perfunctory tone with somewhat greater difficulty. Who the deuce was this young fellow? And why had I never seen him, nor heard of him from either Catharine or Lucile?

Doby brought me the morning paper and a box of cigars. "You sit down here," he said, "or go into my library, just as you like. Josie will tell Catharine you are here. Now I've got to run. There's an important case goes to trial this morning."

There was nothing in the morning paper. I dropped it beside my chair and lit a cigar. Who was that detestable young fellow? I racked my memory for indications of his existence; there were none, and that was best proof of all that he existed. I relighted my cigar. What was I waiting for? To keep Catharine out of

hysteria by philosophic discourse? Oh, those philosophic discourses, while some one else was speaking plain English, no doubt! As for hysteria, Catharine was incapable of it. I put away my cigar, which seemed unable to hold its fire, and rose. I had already been given information as to Lucile's health, and was not that all I had come for?

"Good morning, Mr. Gresham." Catharine had entered the room by a door I had not been watching. She offered me her hand. "Come and sit down." I followed her to the end of the room, where two very deep chairs faced each other.

For several minutes I gazed at her in silence. Had she changed so much, or was it because sleeplessness had made my vision uncertain that an aura of beauty seemed to hover over her, veiling her face from me? I tried to speak, but the words that came to my mind were irrelevant. There really was nothing worth while but contemplation.

"You are pale," said Catharine at length. "You did not sleep."

"You are pale, too," I replied, the spell upon me broken.

"Yes. I didn't sleep, either."

The spell fell upon me again: I had shared with her the curse of sleeplessness. "Idiot!" I said to myself. "What's that to you?"

“I kept thinking and thinking,” said Catharine.

“About the convict,” I said with a desperate effort to recover my common-sense.

“No, about you. I felt that you were in danger.”

“Alas, I wasn’t!” I replied. “That poor devil hadn’t any chance to be dangerous. He was fettered, unarmed, broken down physically and dead with weariness. I don’t think you should have considered him a fair match even for me.”

Catharine smiled faintly. And adorably.

“I’m sorry, though, that he wasn’t dangerous,” I ventured. “A man doesn’t often get an opportunity, in these degenerate days, to encounter perils at a fair lady’s command.”

Catharine smiled again, still more adorably.

“I realise,” I said, “the heroic pose is a little absurd in a mere philosopher.”

“I don’t consider it absurd,” said Catharine gently. “And I don’t consider you a mere philosopher.”

Another foolish speech was struggling to my lips; but the spell returned; the aura of beauty again obscured my vision of Catharine. And before I had recovered my sound senses Lucile appeared, as pink and white and smiling as if she had never gone through a nervous crisis at all.

“Oh, Mr. Gresham, I’m so glad you have come!

I've had a terrible night. I was just sure we'd all be murdered."

"What! With Doby here?"

"Doby is just one man, and there is a regiment of convicts in the camp. Why didn't you stay and help protect us?"

"I sent Mr. Gresham home to look after his own house," said Catharine.

"Listen to the child!" said Lucile. "As if a man like Mr. Gresham had to take orders from a baby like you."

"I find the experience rather pleasant," I said recklessly.

Catharine glanced at me. "Do be still!" her eyes said.

"Nonsense!" said Lucile. "Catharine bores you terribly, if you'd only admit it."

"I won't."

"No, of course you won't. But it's true just the same. I reproach myself bitterly for the hours and hours I've made you wait for me and bore yourself dead with Catharine."

"You can't bore a philosopher dead," I said. "You might bore him alive."

Catharine glanced at me again. "Hush!" said her eyes.

"I'm not going to treat you in that way any more,"

said Lucile. "Listen: come over this afternoon and have tea with me at half-past four. You'll find me all ready."

I was sure she wouldn't be ready. But she was. I promised to come again the next day, at the same hour, and I timed myself thirty minutes early. I had barely exchanged greetings with Catharine when Lucile appeared. Lucile had surely reformed. Alas!

Let it not be supposed that I did not perceive what a fool I was making of myself, or failed to subject my consciousness to vivisection, without anæsthetics. In the cold light of reason, this promised to be a Puncinello-Columbine affair. Very subversive of academic dignity, very detrimental to scholarly progress. Still, since I realised now, in the beginning, that nothing could come of it, there could be no disappointments in store for me. Why not harvest as many pleasant hours as possible so long as the sun shone? So long as that hideous convict should remain under my roof a secret understanding would exist between Catharine and myself, and that was quite sufficient to compensate me for any embarrassments his presence might occasion. My feelings toward Jörgen had come to be very friendly, although his attitude toward me grew increasingly snappish and suspicious as he gained in strength. Something would have to be done with him, but I was now in no great hurry about it. Wesley and

Fanny Zephrina were the only persons much troubled by his presence in the house. Quaking was chronic with them now, and it seemed to me that their hue had changed from a rich, brownish-black to a disconsolate, sooty grey.

One day, when I called at Doby's, Catharine came to the door in response to my knock. "Come, take a walk with me before Mother catches us," she said excitedly. "I've something to show you."

In a few minutes we had crossed a slight rise of ground and had reached a clump of oak trees under whose drooping branches we were quite out of sight of the house.

"I asked Father to find out the history of the escaped convict," said Catharine. "I've got all the documents here." She seated herself on a stump, and unwrapped a large parcel containing papers in envelopes.

"One of my father's friends is secretary of the Texas Prison Reform Association," she explained. "Jörgen Bjerg's case was a peculiar one. Mr. Garner had tried some years ago to get him pardoned. He had all these papers on file, and loaned them to Father." She turned over the pile of envelopes and handed one to me.

"That's Mr. Bjerg before he came to America."

I took from the envelope a small photograph mounted on a thick, cheap card. At the bottom of the card was

printed in capital letters, "K. Nilssens Fotografiske Selskab, Trondhjem."

The face was frank and kindly, possibly somewhat stupid, but decidedly handsome.

"It comes from the right place," I said. "But it can't be Jörgen."

"It is, though. Mr. Garner got it through the Norwegian consul at Galveston. Here's another picture of him."

The second photograph was obviously of the same man, in prison clothes. His face was coarsened, and his close-cropped hair gave him a somewhat sinister look. The stupid expression of the Trondhjem photograph had given way to one of defiance. On the whole, however, the face remained a good one.

"This isn't Jörgen Bjerg, either," I affirmed.

"Yes, it is," said Catharine. "He was worked in a quarry and was badly hurt by an explosion. He was in the hospital a long time, and this is how he looked when he came out." She handed me a third photograph.

Plainly enough this one was of Jörgen Bjerg. His eyes were half closed, his lips drawn up in a fierce snarl that exposed his long teeth. His neck was bent forward so that his head seemed in the photograph to be planted directly on his breast. Great wrinkles on his scalp furrowed his closely cropped hair. And there

was the hideous scar on his brow. The most abandoned and desperate of men, you would have said. And this no doubt he was.

"Now," said Catharine, "we'll see why they did all this to him. This paper shows that he was sent up for taking an overcoat."

"That can hardly be possible," I said sceptically. "Taking an overcoat isn't a felony, surely."

"It isn't. But Mr. Bjerg forced a window to get it. Father says that made the charge burglary."

"If your father says so, it must be true. But it's still hard for me to believe that a man would pay such a penalty for stealing a coat."

"Yes, and they aren't even certain he intended to steal it."

"You surely must be mistaken," I said. "A jury wouldn't convict a man on such a charge without pretty good evidence."

"Read this paper," said Catharine.

The paper was in the form of a petition for a pardon. The petitioners requested that Jörgen Bjerg be unconditionally pardoned and shipped to Norway, where, they averred, he had an old mother living, who had been dependent on him for support. From the "Whereas" paragraphs, I gathered that the judge who presided at his trial now believed that, if Jörgen had been properly defended, the felony indictment would

not have held. Reference was made to an affidavit appended, to which I now turned.

The affidavit was signed by the man whose coat Jörgen had appropriated. In the affidavit he stated that he was a public works contractor, and that Jörgen had been employed by him as an overseer. That Jörgen was a very difficult person to deal with, and that the contractor had discharged him several times, but had re-employed him. That while Jörgen was in his employ, the contractor was accustomed to lend him his heavy coat when the weather was severe, and Jörgen had at least once before forced the window to get the coat, when he had mislaid his key.

After a violent quarrel between the contractor and Jörgen the latter had been finally discharged, definitively, according to the contractor's intention. None the less, Jörgen often came to talk with the contractor's men at their work, and had made overtures to the contractor looking to his re-employment. On a particularly bitter day, he had gone to the office, forced the window and possessed himself of the contractor's coat. He had returned to the contractor's job, wearing the coat, whereupon the contractor had secured his arrest, never supposing that the charge preferred would count as a felony. Jörgen had been convicted, however, and the contractor had thought no more of it.

A monstrous injustice had been perpetrated, if one

could believe this statement. I reserved judgment, however, as I had some doubts as to the value of affidavits appended to pardon petitions. I glanced over another document appended: a statement by the trial judge to the effect that he would have entertained a motion for a new trial if the attorney for the defence, who was described as very inexperienced, had had the presence of mind to make it, and that there could be little doubt that Jörgen Bjerg would have been acquitted on a second trial. That disturbed my doubts, and they were further shaken by an eloquent appeal from the lawyer who had defended Jörgen, to pardon the man whom his criminal incompetence had consigned to penal servitude.

“What does Doby say about this?” I asked. “Does he think the man was innocent of criminal intent?”

“He says there isn’t the shadow of a doubt of it,” said Catharine.

“But how was it possible? The court, or some of the jurors, must have known about these facts.”

“Father says there are some courts that would rather send a man up than not, especially if he is a turbulent character and hasn’t any friends.”

“And place an unnecessary burden on the state?” I demanded, incredulous.

“There isn’t any burden on the state. Father says

that the state makes a good profit out of every able-bodied convict."

I turned back to the "Whereases." One of them stated that Jörgen had served the state well for four years — in the quarries — and had never made any trouble except at one time when he had assaulted a guard who had wantonly abused him. The following "Whereas" stated that he had been terribly injured in a quarry explosion, and, in the opinion of the quarry surgeon, would never again be able to perform valuable services for the state, but would probably be an expense to it.

"Surely," I said in disgust, "the great State of Texas might have pardoned him on this showing. How is it he is still in its service?"

"Before the papers were acted on he joined in a convict's revolt," said Catharine. "So they gave him five years more and put him on the road."

"That's enough," I said. "Let us go back to the house."

"Not yet," said Catharine, remaining seated. "What are you going to do about Jörgen?"

"I am going home to think out a plan for getting him out of Texas."

"Why don't you sit down and talk it over with me now? Mamma is probably not ready to receive you yet."

"The truth is, Catharine, I never can think of Jørgen Bjerg's interests when I am with you. With me he has never been anything more than a pretext."

Catharine rose.

"Now you are angry," I said.

"No. Why should I be? I don't understand you at all."

"Shall I try to make my meaning clearer?"

"No. Not until you've got my protégé safe. Come on."

"Where under the sun have you two been all this time?" exclaimed Lucile in a tone of annoyance as we entered the house.

"I took Mr. Gresham for a little walk, to give you time to get ready."

"I was ready two minutes after Mr. Gresham rang," said Lucile with irritation. "Mr. Gresham hates walks, and you might have let him sit comfortably in the living-room."

"But I do like to walk," I protested.

"No, you don't," insisted Lucile. "No man likes to walk, unless with a lady he's in love with?"

"Really, Lucile, it's a great pleasure to walk with Catharine," I ventured. I realised that Catharine's eyes were fixed upon me.

"Hush!" they said.

CHAPTER XXI

THE BLACK SHEEP

As the days passed Jörgen became more and more restless. He would pace about in the cellar, and occasionally, at night, the negroes would report to me that he was walking on the terrace outside. I would then hurry around the house and order him back under cover. He would growl at me savagely, and sometimes acted as if he had half made up his mind to attack me. His disfigured face, crafty and ill-natured at all times, assumed an expression of deepening suspicion. His shattered mind could apparently not conceive the idea that any one might be trying sincerely to help him.

It would have been more agreeable to keep a savage dog, unchained, in the cellar. Three times a day I brought him his food, as I could not persuade the negroes even to open the cellar door. He had a disconcerting way of starting up suddenly, now from one point in the semi-darkness, now from another. As I handed him his tray, he always dropped an iron or club, with which he had prepared to defend himself against me. Of course I always had my pistol handy, and I intended to let it make a sieve of him if he attacked me—unless he should prove too quick for me,

and he looked as if he might. After a few days of proper feeding, his strength had returned completely. A tremendously powerful man he was, physically; mentally, I estimated him hardly above the level of the ape. What can one do with such a man, especially when an unjust sentence to penal servitude is hanging over him? There may be some institution in the country where you can have him cared for and brought back as nearly as possible to a semblance of manhood. But, if there is such an institution, I do not know how to find it.

The problem of disposing of Jörgen occupied Catharine's mind and mine for over a week. We rarely had any time to ourselves, as Lucile's habit of delay appeared to be definitely broken. Once in a while we would get a few moments, however; and for the rest a language of glances and phrases that meant nothing to Lucile was rapidly growing up between us. If I could have kept my convict guest a few months longer, we should have learned very well to dispense with articulate speech.

"I have an idea," signalled Catharine one day. "Wait till Mamma leaves the room."

I waited, of course. I was overrunning the proper limits of a call, but nothing but physical force could have removed me from the room. Lucile talked and talked, charmingly. At length, she broached a de-

tailed account of a trip to Mexico. She had a trunkful of photographs from that expedition.

"I'd love to see some of them," I exclaimed with enthusiasm.

"Catharine, run to my room and bring an armful of those things, in the left-hand lower drawer of my writing desk."

"I won't, Mamma," said Catharine saucily. "The last time I found something for you, you scolded me for a week for mussing up your things."

"Isn't she the disobedient child?" asked Lucile admiringly. "Do you suppose I ever dared to speak in that way to my mother? I suppose I'll have to get them myself." And she tripped gaily away.

"I have it all planned," said Catharine, speaking very quickly. "You are to engage a touring-car at the garage and our man Peter will drive it up to your house tomorrow evening after dark. You will put Mr. Bjerg in the car, and Peter will drive you to San Antonio. There you will put him on a through car to St. Louis, with a ticket to Norway."

"Why San Antonio?" I objected. "It's one hundred and fifty miles away."

"If you put him on the A. & S. A., they might become suspicious. Besides, there is a lawyer in San Antonio who used to be in love with me. He knows

all the railroad men, and will see that nobody makes any trouble. Here's a note to him."

I accepted the dainty envelope and looked at the address.

"Sidney Hale, Jr.," I read aloud. "I don't like him."

"He's married now," laughed Catharine. "Look bored now, please. Mamma is returning."

"I found them at last," cried Lucile, holding up a basketful of photographs and other small objects. "Catharine, you must have been in my desk again. It's impossible to find anything."

Mexico finally exhausted, I returned to my house to carry out some calculations. Catharine and I had come to the same decision respecting Jørgen Bjerg that the great State of Texas was arriving at two years before: return him to his aged mother in Norway, that her dim eyes might see what America had done with her brave and handsome son. The plan was not very alluring. It was not, however, the sentimental aspect of the question that concerned me just then. The State of Texas may resolutely revolve philanthropic plans of repatriating the unfortunates it has produced, but the state has a fat bank account. Mine had always been rather slender; would it stand the strain? I reckoned up the items entered on the stubs of my check-book. At any rate, I had some money left. How much

would a through ticket to Norway cost, and how much a joy ride to San Antonio? Probably my funds would cover them; to assure myself, I'd make a few cautious inquiries next morning at the station. If my funds didn't suffice, I'd have to borrow some money. But of whom? Not of Doby, for I had a number of reasons for inferring that he was hard-pressed. My friends at the college, if they had any money, wore an air of having none; I doubted that I could raise five dollars from the whole faculty. I'd get the money, though, if I had to resort to stealing. Humanity and Catharine required it.

Fortunately for my morals, I found next morning that it doesn't cost so much to get to Norway as you would suppose. My funds would suffice. I returned to my house to make the few necessary preparations for the flight. First I informed Jörgen of the plan. He received the information with indifference. Not a trace of enthusiasm, not a sign of gratitude. This was not encouraging. But, after all, it wasn't Jörgen I was trying to please. I called at Doby's house at an unreasonably early hour and got just time to tell Catharine at what garage Peter would find the car, when Lucile appeared, irrelevantly pink and white and smiling. I listened for an hour to animated accounts of all sorts of experiences—or tried to listen. Lucile remarked gaily on my distraught air, and suggested that

I must have fallen in love. I needed no signal from Catharine to hush at this time. Life seemed pretty serious to me. I excused myself and returned to my house.

It was hardly dusk when Peter drove up to my door in a big black car. I put a basket of food on board and went to the cellar to get Jörgen. He had grown a huge crop of suspicions since the morning and refused at first to budge. I argued and pleaded in vain: Jörgen had it fixed in his mind that I was taking him out to kill him. At last, when I had almost given up my project, he yielded, and I got him out into the court.

I thought my difficulties were now over, but I was quite mistaken; Jörgen refused to get into the car. He was now convinced that I was taking him back to the quarry. I argued and coaxed and scolded; he said he preferred to be shot where he was. Peter suggested that with Wesley's aid we might bind him, hand and foot, and put him into the car. At that, Wesley, who had been watching proceedings from the doorway, scampered for his room.

"Mr. Gresham!" called Catharine, issuing from the shadow of the house. "I'm afraid he hasn't any money. I brought him what I have. Here, Mr. Bjerg." And she placed a little purse in his hand.

Jörgen dropped the purse and gazed at Catharine, a look of utter bewilderment on his face.

"You'll need the money," said Catharine. "Didn't you see it?" And she picked up the purse and offered it to him again.

"Lady," pleaded Jörgen, "don't let dem take me to de quarry."

"The quarry?" inquired Catharine, mystified.

"He's got it into his crazy head that I'm taking him back to the quarry, where he was hurt," I explained.

"Oh, how foolish!" exclaimed Catharine, addressing Jörgen. "He's sending you home to Norway. Don't you want to go?"

"Ja!" said Jörgen with enthusiasm. "Yes," he repeated with suspicion returning.

"You surely trust *me*, don't you?" Catharine inquired, in a tone of surprise and injury.

"Ja!" Astonishing, I thought, how easy it was for Catharine to solve problems!

"Get in now, Jörgen," I said. But Jörgen did not move. He looked first at Catharine, then at me, as if trying to comprehend something.

"Are you his girl? His sveetheart?" he demanded.

"Yes, of course," said Catharine unhesitatingly. Jörgen climbed into the car and, crouching in the rear seat, fixed his gaze anxiously upon us.

"It was just to reassure him," remarked Catharine nonchalantly.

“Catharine,” I said, trembling with a sudden inspiration, “that reassurance isn’t sufficient to last. You must bid me good-by after the manner appropriate to the part.”

Catharine made no reply. What her expression was I could not see, as her face was in shadow. I threw my arm around her. Was it believable? There was no resistance.

“Just a stage kiss,” laughed Catharine, drawing herself away. “You must hurry on now, while he is still reassured.”

“Catharine,” I said, endeavouring desperately to keep my voice under control, “do you suppose I’m going to allow you to go home without an escort?”

“You must be off, or the reassuring will have been in vain.” And she was gone. Catharine could run like a deer, and I could not. So I seated myself beside Peter and we were off.

Peter drove swiftly while the excellent roads around Asuncion lasted. Then we struck the dirt roads of the black land, dry, fortunately for us, but exceedingly rutty. It was very dark, and every time we crashed across a washout, I thought the creaking machine would go to pieces. It pulled itself together again, however, and staggered on. Jörgen on the back seat bobbed around like a cork on water. I was bumped now against the arm of the seat, now against Peter. But it was the

most pleasant ride I had ever had. My opinion of myself had appreciated several hundred per cent. For once in my life, I had seized a golden opportunity; I was therefore not just a dyed-in-the-wool academic, after all. One hundred and fifty miles of Texas ruts: what is that when your heart beats well?

In an incredibly short time the edge of the sun cropped up among the mesquite in the east: soon his big round wheel was rolling along the horizon. Such a morning there never was since the world was young. A clatter rose from the machine; Peter stopped short and began to investigate the works. I climbed out and walked briskly up the road. I seemed almost devoid of weight. If Peter had reported that all was up with the old machine and we'd have to walk the remaining sixty miles, it would scarcely have damped my spirits.

The trouble with the machine was easily cured, and we whizzed on. Yellow dogs came down and raced us, negro boys yelled at us, roosters came out on the road in front of us, apparently in the hope of getting up damage suits, and only changed their minds when their ambitions were near realisation. And now we struck a good macadam road and fairly flew. We were approaching San Antonio.

"Peter," I said, "how the deuce are we going to find Mr. Sidney Hale, Jr.?"

"Ah kin fin' him," said Peter confidently. "Miss

Catharine, she tol' me to go out Flores, tuh'n to de left at de white stucco house in de peppeh trees, an' I sho' couldn't miss his house."

"All right, if you can find him."

We were not many miles from the city, for we had struck a broad zone laid out in "additions." "These handsome villa sites for sale. Price \$250. One dollar down; one dollar monthly instalment."

"Ah reckon dis am Flores," said Peter, slowing down. "Yes, sah, it sho' am." We got up speed again, and whirled along a street curving beside a little stream. A stucco house among pepper trees was before us: we turned to the left and proceeded a mile or more between comfortable houses on terraces green with Bermuda grass. At last we stopped before a fine, new colonial house.

"Ah reckon dis am de house," said Peter.

I ascended the steps to the gallery, and raised the shiny new knocker. A yellow mulatto boy appeared.

"Does Mr. Sidney Hale live here?" I inquired.

"Yes, sah," said the mulatto. "Will you kindly take a seat in the hall?"

"Please give him this note," I said.

Presently appeared a very suave and pleasant young man (growing bald, I noted with satisfaction), with Catharine's note in his hand.

"I am pleased to meet you, Mr. Gresham," he said

cordially. He glanced at the note again. "We'll all have breakfast, and then we can leave your brother here while we go down to the station and arrange for his transportation."

I started a bit. Brother? The queen, of course, could do no wrong; but if she had wanted to foist such a dreadful changeling upon the serene memory of my parents, why didn't she tell me about it?

I returned to the auto and got Jörgen to descend. He was pretty much dazed, and screwed up his face atrociously. He walked up to the house with a crouching gait that robbed him of a foot of his height and seemed to add six inches to his width. Mr. Hale, in the doorway, greeted him courteously. Jörgen grunted.

"Perhaps your brother would prefer to have breakfast in his room," said Mr. Hale considerately. "He must be very tired."

"He would," I replied.

When I had deposited Jörgen's uncouth form on the plush sofa in Mr. Hale's room, I returned to the hall. My host ushered me into the breakfast room.

"Catharine says he is going home to Norway," said Mr. Hale. "Gresham doesn't sound to me like a Norwegian name."

"It isn't," I said. "Jörgen's name is Bjerg."

"Oh, I see," said Mr. Hale, evidently quite illuminated. "You are half-brothers."

“Yes,” I said, swallowing my repugnance.

“You know, Mr. Gresham,” said Mr. Hale in a confidential tone, as we seated ourselves, “every family has its black sheep. Now I have a half-brother. Lord, what didn’t my father do for that boy? Well, sir, he got so bad my father determined to send him away. Gave him five thousand dollars and told him to go round the world. Well, sir, he struck India, and just made one big spree of the whole country. When he got to Calcutta he was so far gone he couldn’t see. And what do you think he did?”

“I can’t possibly guess.”

Mr. Hale laughed merrily. “Well, sir, he engaged one of those Hindoo artists to tattoo him, and then he went off into a state of coma. When he came to, he found that the artist had covered him from his neck down with every reptile in India. Snakes, my Lord! and scorpions, and toads, and bugs as big as your fist. Well, sir, that reformed him. He came straight home, and has never touched a drop since. But no matter how hot it is, he is forced to wear a high collar.” Mr. Hale dropped his voice. “There is just the most awful bug you ever dreamed of, right at the nape of his neck.”

“I might try tattooing on Jörgen,” I suggested. “But perhaps he’s too far gone already.”

“He does look pretty rough,” said Mr. Hale. “But

I don't know what Charles looked like just before he got himself tattooed."

After breakfast Mr. Hale took me to the station, where we interviewed a number of courteous gentlemen, who offered me large draughts of their sympathy, and helped me arrange matters for Jörgen's transportation. I purchased a ticket to Norway, and consigned it to the care of the obliging Pullman conductor who was to be on the three-o'clock train for St. Louis. He also accepted in trust twenty-five dollars, to be laid out for Jörgen's benefit in any way he considered wise. A drawing-room to St. Louis was available, and the porter agreed, for a consideration, not to listen too closely to Jörgen's talk, as he had a touch of the sun. I returned with Mr. Hale to his house, and after lunch we got Jörgen without difficulty to the train and stowed him away in his compartment. As the train pulled out, I bade my obliging host farewell, and Peter and I set out for Asuncion.

CHAPTER XXII

THE QUEEN CAN DO NO WRONG

THE return journey was not so pleasant. As the afternoon advanced, the temperature fell rapidly and the sky became overcast. "Ah reckon it's a wet no'ther," said Peter. A gust of wind swept down upon us from the northwest, raising the thick dust of the road to the sky. We wrapped blankets around ourselves and drove on. "Get as fah as we kin befo' de roads am gone."

Fifty miles out of San Antonio we stopped at a garage and replenished our stock of gasoline and water. As we started away again we were whipped by the first drops of rain, driven in almost horizontal lines by the fierce wind. When we drove across the wind the hood of the automobile sheltered us fairly well, but when we faced its blasts, which we seemed to do most of the time, the raindrops searched out every nook in the car. I proposed that we turn in at the next garage, and wait until the rain stopped. But Peter scouted the suggestion. The rain might continue for four days, he said: it had been known to rain six days without intermission. Besides, there was a stretch of road ahead which was simply impassable once

it got well soaked. So we drove on, Peter sitting up manfully guiding the machine, I crouching on the rear seat, wrapped in a blanket which was already dripping wet. I was never so cold in my life, but Peter comforted me by the assertion that nobody ever freezes to death in a wet norther.

The roads had become slippery, and the auto skidded around dangerously. The dauntless Peter showed no concern; on he drove, with all the power he had. Sometimes the wheels on one side would slip into a rut nearly deep enough to overturn us, and it would take them a mile to climb out again. The engine was puffing hard, but we were making little speed; the roads had already become soft.

The black night at last began to give way to the grey of the morning penetrating the rain. Our car seemed hardly to be moving: the wheels beat the soft mud like steamship paddles. "We'll never make it, Peter," I called in despair.

"We sho' will," replied Peter encouragingly. "It ain't a mile to de good road." The machine chugged laboriously. "Dere she am!" shouted Peter joyously. We had struck the main macadam road leading to Asuncion. The car picked up speed and soon we were almost flying.

"What's this?" I exclaimed, as the road began to rumble under our wheels. "The bridge?"

“It sho’ am,” said Peter. Now we were on brick pavement, driving down old Main Street. How hospitable it seemed!

“Ah’ll drive you home, sah, befo’ Ah put de auto in de garage,” said the tireless Peter. I assented; it seemed physically impossible for me to get home in any other way. The rain drove in our faces, and soaked us thoroughly again. It didn’t matter; we were at home. In a few moments we were ploughing through the new road which Jörgen had helped construct. Doby’s house appeared in sight, then my own roof, among the trees.

It was about nine o’clock when I hobbled stiffly into my house. Wesley welcomed me joyfully, and bustled around to start a big fire in the living-room hearth. By the time I had returned from my room in dry clothes, the fire was roaring up the chimney. I drew an armchair up before the hearth and sat down to toast out my numbness. I really ought to go over to Doby’s, I felt, to inform Catharine of the successful execution of our project. It was a little early, though, and I was almost dead for lack of sleep. I leaned my head on the cushioned arm of the chair and dozed away. When I awoke, the room was dark, except for the glow of embers in the hearth. I turned on the light and looked at my watch. Eight o’clock! I pulled on my raincoat and rubbers, and hurried down the path to Doby’s house.

I found Doby and Lucile and Catharine in the living-room. They greeted me cordially, Lucile effusively. Lucile was very much excited about something. Doby was visibly perplexed. Catharine threw me a few friendly glances, and then excused herself, alleging a headache. What did this mean?—I pondered. My spirits were sinking.

“Gresham,” said Doby, “I don’t want to be inquisitive, but I don’t quite understand it.”

“What?” I demanded.

“You eloped!” cried Lucile, beaming upon me. “Tell me just one thing: Was it Pergolino’s daughter?”

“Good heavens, no!” I exclaimed.

“Well, then, who under the sun was the lady?” said Lucile, her brow contracted with perplexity.

“There wasn’t any lady,” I asserted vigorously.

“Nonsense!” said Lucile. “Does a young man hire an auto and drive all the way to San Antonio by himself?”

“There was no lady,” I repeated.

“Listen,” said Lucile. “There’s no reason you should make a secret of it here. I think it is just too romantic for anything. When you bring her back I’m going to take her under my wing. I’m sure she’s awfully interesting; all she needs is a little training—a little advice, I mean. I suppose you’re hiding her from old Pergolino?”

“Lucile,” I said, beginning to be somewhat vexed, “you’re very kind and generous. But really, I haven’t seen Elena for months. And there wasn’t any lady in this case at all.”

“Who would have supposed Mr. Gresham capable of such fibs?” said Lucile with severity. “I am going to crush all your denials with one word,—Peter!”

“Peter!” I exclaimed. “You don’t mean to say——”

“Peter told us all about it. Where you got the license, where the ceremony was performed, everything. He even told us what the bride wore, but the fool negro didn’t know whether she was dark or fair.”

I was staggered. But possibly Lucile was just shooting in the dark.

“Peter may have been lying,” said Doby gravely. “But he certainly did tell us about the ceremony.”

“Where is that fool negro?” I demanded, rising in wrath.

“Sit down, Mr. Gresham,” commanded Lucile. “I don’t see why you should be so angry about it. Of course he promised not to tell, but he’s our man, and I made him do it.”

“Pardon me, Lucile, but it’s a monstrous fabrication. I’m going to have it out with Peter.” And I made for the door and across the yard to the negro quarters. Their large room was lit up. Through the

window I could see Peter's grinning face. I pushed the door open.

"Peter, you scoundrel, did you say I ran away with a lady?"

Peter came to the door, quite unabashed. "'Scuse me, sah, Ah'll jus' step to de bahn wid you."

I set out for the barn, Peter following. Out of ear-shot of the cabin I stopped.

"Now, Peter," I said, "I intend to break your neck. You said I eloped and got married."

"Yes, sah," said Peter unhesitatingly. "But Miss Catharine, she done tole me to say it."

Catharine! The queen, of course, could do no wrong. But what was this? I'd better return to my house and ponder upon it.

I pondered upon it the better part of the night. And the more I pondered the more bruised I felt. There had to be some explanation of Peter's absence, no doubt, and some one might have seen me drive away in an automobile. But this, it seemed to me, was explanation in excess. Of course it would be easy to disprove the charge by the testimony of Wesley and Fanny Zephrina. But then the real explanation was likely to slip out. And under the law, my exploit would fall in the ugly category of felonies.

The next morning I reappeared before my classes, which I had been neglecting shamefully, and delivered

some of the most incoherent and rambling lectures ever heard. At the close of the last one the hall-boy came to my desk and said that President Brett desired to see me in his office.

The President's manner was friendly, but perplexed. "Gresham," he said, "I've heard something about you that makes me feel like proffering a little advice."

"I shall receive it with gratitude," I said.

"I consider myself a liberal man," said the President. "Whether a man acquires a wife by the ancient method of capture or by the approved modern method of purchase, it is all one to me. This is, however, a very conservative institution, and, if a member of our faculty acquires a wife by the earlier law, it is wise not to keep her in hiding too long."

"Your advice is sound," I said, "but not applicable. I haven't acquired a wife by any law."

The President opened his eyes wide. "What about this elopement?"

"A myth."

"A myth that requires interpretation," said the President decisively.

"All right; I'll interpret it. Do you remember the episode of the escape of a convict, some weeks ago?"

"Yes," said the President, with a mystified look.

"Well, I'd been harbouring him in my cellar ever

since. I hired an automobile and took him to San Antonio, and shipped him to Norway."

The President gasped. "What the deuce did you do that for?"

"The man was innocent."

The President assumed a worldly-wise air. "Now, Gresham, a man isn't on the chain gang for nothing."

"Yes, that's what I said before I knew anything about the case."

"Tell me, how did you come to know anything about the case?"

"I found out about it though Cath——" I stopped, a bit confused. I had not intended to get Catharine mixed up in the affair at all.

The President laughed. "You preferred the opinions of a girl of eighteen to those of judge and jury?"

"It isn't a matter of opinion," I said, with irritation. "I can get the documents that will convince you or any other reasonable man that a monstrous injustice had been done. Nobody can ever right it, but I did what I could."

"I'll accept your word for it," said the President. "But tell me, how did you come to make Catharine your confidante, and not Mr. Arbuthnot?"

"Doby is a stickler for law and order. Besides, Catharine was in it from the beginning. The credit for rescuing the man belongs entirely to her."

“The woman tempted me and I fell,” said the President.

“Yes, but there wasn’t any falling. Permit me to bring you those documents.”

“No, I take your word for the righteousness of your acts. What I want to know now is, why did you get up such an embarrassing explanation as that elopement myth?”

“I didn’t get it up.”

“Who did then? Oh, I see. Catharine.”

I made no reply. The President sat back in his chair and laughed. “Awfully unscrupulous little devil, Catharine.”

“I beg your pardon, sir, but that’s not the way I conceive of her.” I was growing angry.

The President eyed me keenly. “She is, though. You should have known her mother, a number of years ago. Why, Gresham, Lucile thought it quite justifiable to get a man in love with her, just to make him execute some little project of hers. I’ll tell you some day what a fool she once made of me.”

My indignation was gone. I was beginning to feel cold.

“Tell me, Mr. President, how did you get wind of the matter so early?”

“Lucile called me up over the ’phone. She has doubtless informed everybody in town.”

“Good Lord!” I exclaimed in dismay.

For a few moments the President maintained a grave demeanour and then leaned back in his chair and laughed.

“I beg your pardon, Gresham,” he said, at length, recovering his serious manner, “but you are going to have a peculiar status in this town. A married man, with no wife visible. Why, Gresham, you can hardly be said to exist, socially.”

“It doesn’t matter much. Is there any further advice you wish to offer?”

“No. Don’t be too angry with me, Gresham. I shouldn’t have laughed.” And he began to laugh again. I retired.

The queen, to be sure, could do no wrong. I rejected with growing anger the President’s insinuation that Catharine had allowed me to fall in love with her merely to assure my loyalty in executing her project. Suppose Lucile had done such a thing in her youth: the resemblance between Catharine and Lucile was, after all, only superficial. But after some hours of reflection my faith began to fail me. If Catharine had wanted to enslave me to her purposes, she would have behaved exactly as she did. And how much did I know of her, anyway?

CHAPTER XXIII

THE FORTUNES OF AN AMPHIBIAN

THERE is no need for a newspaper in the same town with Lucile. I discovered very soon that my personality had acquired a sort of popular interest that it had never possessed before. As I entered my classroom the second day after my return, I was received with a storm of applause. When I had succeeded in establishing silence, Pug's voice piped up:

"Puhfess, give us just three guesses who she is."

I frowned, and the class hissed Pug down. It was uncommonly hard lecturing that day.

I met several of my colleagues in the hall, who congratulated me with a cordiality mingled with suspicion. I entered my protests, for formality's sake, but they did no good whatever. I went downtown and reaped great quantities of congratulations. Even the cashier at my bank offered me a thin, white hand through the cash window. Mr. Marshall was most enthusiastic of all. He was not only convinced that I had carried away some fair lady, but he was quite certain that it was Pergolino's daughter.

"Marshall," I said, "this is a monstrous hoax, and I'll prove it to you. The sun is out again, and Pergo-

lino's pavilion is habitable. We'll go and have a sandwich, and see if we don't get a glimpse of the fair Elena."

Mr. Marshall was frankly sceptical, but he accepted my challenge. On the way to Pergolino's Garden he informed me that he was the very first man to discover my romance. He had been visiting a friend ten miles on this side of San Antonio, and had seen us dash by in the automobile. He had shouted at me, but I must have been too preoccupied to hear. His curiosity was aroused and that evening, having returned to Asuncion, he had called on Lucile, who had put him on the right track. The next day she had called him up by telephone and had told him that she had got the whole story out of Peter.

Pergolino's Garden was deserted, although the rays of the sun were flooding the pavilion. We chose a spot sheltered from the breeze, which was still rather cold, and drummed on the table for a waiter. Presently we spied the red dress under the gloom of the fig tree. Elena lingered an instant, and then approached the pavilion.

Not a whit changed was Pergolino's daughter. The same dress, the same sunny calm of expression, the same wide-open eyes, with pupils lost in their dark pools, but probably searching one's defects of countenance.

“Who is she?” she demanded, after giving me a long survey.

“She isn’t anybody,” I replied, as usual.

Elena surveyed me for a little while longer, and then retreated. We watched her until she disappeared in a dark doorway.

“You suhtainly ah a deep one, Mr. Gresham,” said Marshall. “It can’t have been Elena. But who the devil was it?”

“Nobody,” I replied.

“But Ah saw you with mah own eyes,” persisted Mr. Marshall.

“You didn’t see any lady, though.”

“Of coahse Ah didn’t. She was on the back seat.”

There was no use in trying to convince Mr. Marshall. I returned to my house, my perplexities somewhat reduced, but my happiness not materially increased. It was clear now why Catharine had invented that tale. Mr. Marshall’s curiosity had to be slaked in some way: Lucile’s imagination had provided a means of slaking it, and Catharine had found it the simplest plan merely to have Peter confirm Lucile’s suspicions.

And suppose they had not been confirmed? Mr. Marshall would have been quite capable of calling at my house and of quizzing Wesley and Fanny Zephрина. He might have got at the truth, which would have been

very uncomfortable for me, and still more for Jörgen Bjerg, who was by no means in safety as yet. I was clearly justified in exculpating Catharine of President Brett's accusation of unscrupulousness.

And yet I was deriving small comfort from the thought. In this little comedy, in which Catharine, Jörgen Bjerg and I had played our parts, the leading rôle was, of course, Catharine's, but the rôle next in importance was not mine, but Jörgen Bjerg's. Every move of the leading lady had been in the interest of Jörgen Bjerg. Not the least consideration had Catharine shown, at any point, for my convenience. As I ran the whole comedy through my mind, I saw that I hadn't been an actor at all, but just an uncommonly useful piece of stage machinery.

Fortunately or unfortunately for me, I had been a sentient piece of machinery; and as such, I had secured rewards worth the hard usage I had received. My functions were exhausted, however; my proper place, henceforth, I could plainly see, was the properties storeroom—more literally, my own house. I might accumulate cobwebs, but for the future I resolved to remain there. And I held to my resolution, although Doby came every evening and reproached me for leaving Lucile to perish of curiosity. And something had got into Catharine, he said; she was probably curious, too. I commissioned Doby to inform Lucile and Catha-

rine that I was acquiring philosophy so fast that I'd be an altogether different man when they saw me again.

A week had passed and the small world of Asuncion had quite lost interest in my matrimonial affairs. I had completed my process of readjustment, and was growing pleased with my progress in wisdom. A serene, cold wisdom, with no comfort in it, but highly appraised by all the world's sages. A letter arrived in the hand of a friend of mine in New York, to whom I had entrusted the commission of getting Jörgen from the train to the steamship. There were a few lines from my friend to inform me that the commission had been executed, and that Jörgen Bjerg was already on the high seas. And there was also a note, in an almost illegible pencil scrawl, from Jörgen himself.

In deciphering the note, which consumed much time, I discovered that it was meant for Catharine as well as for me. At first I made up my mind to send it to her through the mails. But she would never be able to make it out. And anyway, there was no longer any good reason why I should not call at Doby's house. Had I not acquired wisdom? In a week, if you will devote yourself systematically to philosophy, you can provide yourself with a pretty good protective covering of cobwebs and dust.

Early in the afternoon, accordingly, I rang Doby's

bell. Catharine received me. She was somewhat pale, but more beautiful than ever, even in the cold light of wisdom.

“I am very glad to see you, Mr. Gresham,” she said, offering me her hand. Such a soft, warm little hand!

“I suppose you will never forgive me,” she said in a low voice.

“There is nothing you have done that wasn't admirable,” I replied in my most dispassionate tone.

How difficult to find anything to say, after a week has broken the course of intimate association! In the long silence that followed I remembered why I had come.

“I have a letter to us from Jörgen Bjerg,” I said. “May I read it to you?”

“Please do.”

I read: “I am in Ny Yurk. I vil sale tomorrur to Kjöbenhavn. I am man agen. I say tank to my gode frends. They are for gode for this hell country. I not pray longer, but my pore ol moder, in Norge, she pray for my gode, gode frends in Texas. I say much tank. Jörgen Bjerg.”

Catharine uttered a little sob and put her hands on my shoulders. It was just the throb of human sympathy that was moving her; it was not directed toward me, except as I was the nearest human being.

I had no right to exploit the generous emotion; but I could, and so I did.

It was unscrupulous, but had I not sound precedents? Does not the bold warrior exploit his lady's love of country and her admiration of heroic deeds performed by his uniform, not by him? Does not the divine, consciously or unconsciously, exploit his lady's sweet piety? There may indeed be a man worth enough in himself to win the love of a lady, without borrowing the aid of values imputed to him and not inherent in him. If there is, I salute him; he is no kin of mine. Philosophy gives its votaries no light to dazzle a lady's eyes. Chance had bestowed upon me an opportunity to shine for a few seconds in the light of humanity; and I seized the opportunity.

"I hear Mamma coming," whispered Catharine, moving back a few steps, and wiping her eyes.

"Why, Mr. Gresham," cried Lucile, "I thought you had deserted us forever. Catharine, child, you've been crying!"

"Mr. Gresham scolded me terribly," said Catharine, smiling. "Really, Mr. Gresham, I can't help being frivolous."

"You are a sweet, darling child," said Lucile, kissing her, with a resentful glance at me. "If Mr. Gresham had any eyes, he wouldn't care whether you are frivolous or not."

“I really didn’t intend to wound Catharine,” I said apologetically. “But——”

“But!” repeated Lucile. “If you hadn’t been absorbed in your old philosophy, you would have noticed what a lovely, lovely girl Catharine is.”

“I have noticed it,” I said. “Hush!” signalled Catharine.

“No, you haven’t, either. If you had, you never would have eloped with another lady.”

“Lucile, don’t you think it is rather fortunate that things are as they are? You and Doby are such good friends of mine, it would have been hard on you to be forced to bar me from your house.”

“I wouldn’t have barred you from my house,” said Lucile, laughing. “I’m quite able to manage my daughter, and you too, Mr. Gresham, without resort to extreme measures.”

“I haven’t the least doubt of that,” I said with conviction.

“I should just have watched you,” said Lucile. “Do you know, Mr. Gresham, I have been watching you for some time?”

“Really, Lucile? That is very flattering.”

“There was something queer about the way you acted. I had no idea of that other affair, and you were here so much of the time——”

"Not an unreasonable hypothesis," I laughed. Catharine glanced reprovingly at me.

"Of course, so long as I could see that Catharine remained entirely cold, there was no reason to be disturbed."

"I don't see why you should ever have given yourself the slightest concern," I remarked.

"No, I don't either," said Lucile. "Catharine is just a child, and I can read every thought she has."

"Not every thought, Mamma!" Catharine held up her hands in a pretty show of dismay.

"Yes, dear child, every thought. And do you know what I read? Sweetness, simplicity, candour. Really, Mr. Gresham, I can't see how you could ever have fallen in love with any one else."

"Why, Lucile, you've already implied that that was safest for me."

"Safest! You know, Mr. Gresham, you safe and sane professors give me a creepy feeling. You seem to be almost amphibians."

I was tempted to reply, but Catharine's glance dissuaded me.

"I'll have to go now and give the cook orders for dinner," said Lucile, rising. "Talk about slavery; the real slave is the mistress of the house. Catharine, don't let Mr. Gresham run away; I'm going to make him tell me about his new wife."

“I have broken a solemn promise I made to my mother,” began Catharine, as soon as Lucile was out of the room.

“And what was that?” I inquired.

“I promised I wouldn’t allow myself to become engaged before my nineteenth birthday.”

“Catharine,” I asked, with a desperate endeavour to suppress the quaking in my voice, “do you consider that you and I are engaged, now?”

“Yes. Don’t you?” Catharine gazed at me in astonishment.

“I certainly want to,” I said. “It’s pretty hard to believe, though.”

“Mamma is not to suspect it until my birthday.”

“And when will that be?”

“Next October.”

“And do you suppose that with such a secret I can act the philosopher all those months?”

“You’ll have to,” said Catharine with determination. “Look the philosopher, now. Mamma’s coming back!”

CHAPTER XXIV

THE JOYS OF ARCHITECTURE

“MR. GRESHAM,” said Lucile one evening, assuming her ancient tone of command, “you’ll have to do something about your house. It has done very nicely for a bachelor’s den, but it won’t do to install a wife in.”

“Oh, yes, do build!” exclaimed Catharine enthusiastically. “I just love the smell of new lumber and drying mortar. If you’ll build, Mamma and I will call on you every afternoon, to see that everything goes right.”

“If Mr. Gresham is wise,” said Doby, “he won’t touch a thing about the place until Mrs. Gresham arrives. Her ideas of building may be very different from yours, Lucile.”

“Nonsense!” exclaimed Lucile. “What does that little thing know about building?” Lucile couldn’t get it out of her head that it was really Elena who was my alleged wife, although she, as well as every one else in town, knew that Pergolino’s daughter was still flitting about among her father’s guests.

“Whoever she is, she may have ideas of her own,” persisted Doby. “They may not be as good as your

ideas, Lucile; they probably ain't. But this is her house."

"I think Mr. Gresham has something to say about it," said Lucile with vigour. "It's his house, too, and you have to admit, Doby, after all I went through in building this house, I must know a little about building."

"I'm not denying that, Lucile. I only say, your ideas may not be her ideas."

"She hasn't any ideas," said Lucile dogmatically. "Has she, Mr. Gresham?"

"I don't know," I admitted.

"There, you see, Doby," said Lucile triumphantly. "She couldn't have any. She's just a child, no older than Catharine."

"We can put it to the test, then," I suggested. "Have you any ideas about building, Catharine?"

"I haven't now," said Catharine decisively. "But just let me smell new lumber and drying mortar, I'd probably have some ideas. That was the way with Mother."

"Of course," said Lucile. "Every time I came into the house I had at least one new idea. Didn't I, Doby?"

"Yes, Lucile. They were good ideas, too; they cost me from one hundred dollars to five hundred dollars each."

“There you go again, Doby. Do you suppose it was your money that built this beautiful house? No, indeed. It was my ideas.”

“Oh, yes! I’ve always admitted that, Lucile,” said Doby apologetically.

“Still, you always drag in your old money. You men don’t think of anything but money.”

“Somebody has got to think about money,” said Doby doggedly. “I’ve got to think of it. So has Mr. Gresham.”

“Are you thinking about money, Mr. Gresham?” demanded Catharine.

“No,” I replied truthfully. “I have something better to think of.”

“I can guess what,” said Lucile beamingly. “She is pretty and you feel you ought to bring her to a better house. Don’t you, Mr. Gresham?”

“I certainly do,” I agreed.

“There. I told you so, Doby,” said Lucile with satisfaction. “Listen, Doby, you stop at Mr. Ellsworth’s office in the morning, and tell him to come out here tomorrow afternoon.”

“Mr. Ellsworth is a building contractor,” explained Doby.

“Yes, and the best you ever saw,” exclaimed Lucile enthusiastically. “You never saw so obliging a man. I used to come to this house when it was building and

something that didn't seem right would catch my eye. 'You'd better take that out,' I'd say. And he'd take it right out and put in something else."

"He was very obliging," said Doby quietly, "and he charged it to me."

"There you go with your old money again," said Lucile impatiently. "I suppose you'd have let this room be spoiled by that hideous old mantel we had at first."

"And which you designed," said Doby.

"Of course I designed it. I designed every single thing in this house, from start to finish. I never denied I made mistakes. Heaps of them. But I always had sense enough to see when I'd made a mistake, and the courage to have it rectified."

"At my expense," said Doby.

"There you are croaking again, Doby. Do you wonder at the lines of care in my face, Mr. Gresham?"

"There aren't any, however," I asserted.

"Yes, there are, too. I could do ever so much better with the house now, though. And you shall have the benefit of my experience. Be at home tomorrow afternoon, and Catharine and I will bring Mr. Ellsworth over."

"But shouldn't I get an architect to draw the plans, first?" I asked.

"An architect? No, indeed. We tried one. Well,

there wasn't one single, solitary thing in his plans that was right. Oh, you can't imagine what a time I had in getting rid of that man. I thought he would never let me alone. But he gave up at last."

"I paid him his full fees," explained Doby.

"I wish you'd keep still, Doby," said Lucile, quite vexed.

The next afternoon Lucile and Catharine and Mr. Ellsworth appeared. Mr. Ellsworth was a tall, thin man, with a habit of chewing pine shavings—"Presbyterian tobacco," according to his own nomenclature. He was a man of scarcely any words at all, and of great powers of condensation of the speech of others. You'd give a thousand words of instructions, and he'd put down just one little cabalistic sign in his greasy notebook. I didn't give the instructions, be it understood: Lucile did. I tried hard to follow them myself; but I didn't get a very clear idea, they were too numerous. So much, however, I was able to retain: All the partitions in the house, without exception, were to be ripped out. Both end walls were to be pulled down, and the house lengthened thirty feet. Mr. Ellsworth suggested that it would be cheaper to extend one end, and leave the other intact, but Lucile pointed out that such a plan would not leave the house in right relation to the live-oak in front. The roof was to be raised ten feet. Two new wings were to be constructed,

extending forward thirty feet, in order to create a dear little court in front of the house. Wide double-deck galleries were to run all the way round the court, with as many clumps of fat cement columns as could be squeezed in. As for the development of the interior, that might remain for later determination.

“You’ve got that all down?” demanded Lucile at last. “When can you begin?”

Mr. Ellsworth examined his book. “Tomorrow morning.”

“Mr. Gresham,” said Catharine, “let us go back to the oak tree and see if we can imagine how the house will look.” We left Lucile to give some additional instructions to Mr. Ellsworth and walked to the oak tree, and somewhat beyond, to get a better view of the house.

“Mr. Gresham,” said Catharine, as soon as we were out of earshot, “this is my house, not Mother’s. And I’m going to have it built just to suit me. Not her.”

“You surely shall,” I said. “Have you any ideas as to how you want it built?”

“No, not yet. But I certainly don’t want it to look the way Mamma is planning it. She wants it to be just a sort of deformed baby of her house.”

Catharine was in dead earnest. I wanted to laugh, but it wasn’t safe. I had expected to be put through trials similar to Doby’s, with Lucile designing the im-

provements I was paying for. But here was a new condition to meet.

I assured Catharine that I would delay proceedings until she had had time to work out her plans. We strolled back to Lucile and Mr. Ellsworth, and listened a while to Lucile's supplementary instructions.

"Well, Mr. Gresham," said Mr. Ellsworth cheerfully, slipping a rubber band around his notebook, "I'll have ten men on the job to-morrow morning."

"I think perhaps it would be better to wait a few days," I suggested. "I need a little time to get together the funds to finance the undertaking."

"Oh, that's all right," said Lucile reassuringly. "Mr. Ellsworth isn't in any hurry for his money. Are you, Mr. Ellsworth?"

"No," said Mr. Ellsworth in a somewhat less cheerful tone.

"You see, Lucile," I objected, "I haven't the least idea how much these improvements are likely to cost. And Mr. Ellsworth hasn't the least idea how much money I have."

"That's the truth," assented Mr. Ellsworth.

"Oh, you men!" exclaimed Lucile impatiently. "All you think about is money, money!"

"Mr. Gresham is just like Father," said Catharine disapprovingly. "He's not nearly so much interested

in the beautiful house you are planning as in the money it will cost."

"It's disgusting," said Lucile. "Why, this will cost hardly any money at all."

"But suppose I have even less?" I suggested mildly.

"You can't make me believe that," said Lucile with decision. "You wouldn't have had the nerve to run off and get married, if you hadn't any money. Anyway, you can borrow the money, if you must."

Mr. Ellsworth and I exchanged glances of mutual understanding.

"We'll wait a few days," said Mr. Ellsworth. "Anyway, I'm not sure I've got everything clear. I'll have to study your plans over. I must hurry down to the Aiken job now, before the men quit. Good evening." And he was gone.

"You never should have let him get away," said Lucile angrily. "Now you can't tell when he'll be ready to begin work. Men think they know an awful lot about business, but they'd never get a thing done if there weren't any women to push them along. Come, Catharine, we must go home."

"You're managing pretty well," signalled Catharine, as she followed Lucile down the steps to the creek path. I went to my gate and looked down the road. A few rods away I saw the figure of a man leaning against the fence under a hackberry tree. I whistled.

It was Mr. Ellsworth, as I had suspected. I beckoned to him, and he returned. We established ourselves in the hammock and talked business until the sun went down. When he left we had reached a pretty thorough understanding. He was to find that he had omitted to consider one of his uncompleted jobs, which would require all his attention for six weeks. The work I wanted done was of a pretty uncertain kind, part demolition, part repair, part new construction. Moreover, I realised that any plans we might make would be subject to frequent revision. Accordingly, we decided to carry on the work under an oral agreement, by the terms of which I would reimburse him for outlays for material and labour, and he would add a percentage for his profit. At any time I pleased I could call a halt in the proceedings, and he had the corresponding privilege of retiring from the job whenever he chose. The arrangement struck me as a pretty loose one, offering fair opportunities on both sides for fraud. But the number of honest men in Texas is astonishingly large, and Mr. Ellsworth had most of the earmarks of one of them.

The financial aspects of the enterprise did not disturb me greatly. My patrimony had consisted of two farms in Missouri, a kind of possession regarded as valuable, nobody knows why. They rarely yielded me any income worth mentioning: one year the crops would

burn up with the drouth; another year they would be drowned out by the rains. In the six years in which the farms had been under my control, I had become acquainted with every species of tenant rascality practised in Missouri, from the vulgar, almost honest form of throwing all the spoiled grain into the landlord's share, to the extreme form of burning down the barn in order to collect insurance money on a cow dying in it. A city man, ridden by the delusion that rural property is a secure investment, had just given me ten thousand dollars for one of those farms. It was so purely a windfall that I felt justified in spending the money recklessly. Accordingly, within that limit Catharine was to improve my house as she chose. It would be an infinite pleasure to hear her speak of it as "my house," and to discuss with her all the details of its construction. Would she ever occupy it? This I doubted. But constructing the house under secret orders from Catharine, conflicting most frequently with those of Lucile, offered a vastly more promising basis for intimate association than did the rescue of Jørgen Bjerg. This must necessarily last several months, and would be worth the half of a far larger patrimony than mine.

Six weeks produced a marvellous crystallisation in Catharine's plans. At the beginning she appeared to work from only one datum: that nothing whatever should be as Lucile wanted it. Sometimes we would

agree on a perfectly reasonable plan; Lucile would later hit upon a similar one, and then Catharine would insist that it wouldn't do: we'd have to begin all over again. The labour of resisting Lucile's proposals devolved wholly upon me. Lucile made up her mind that I was the most pig-headed man in Christendom. She refused, however, to leave me to my own devices. To conquer my opposition had come to mean an achievement to her. She scolded me constantly; at the same time, she was constantly drawing comparisons, in Doby's presence, between his spinelessness and my independence. Through it all Catharine preserved her candid demeanour of unconcern in the prosy details of construction.

Since my supposed marriage, Lucile had returned to her ancient habits of delay. Catharine and I had Doby's living-room frequently to ourselves. We had unlimited time to discuss our building plans and other matters besides. How fascinating are building plans, especially when they develop under the hand of an exquisitely pretty creature whom you adore. "The living-room mantel isn't to be like this one at all. Not at all. There are to be two shelves, the first so high, do you see?" And a little drooping wrist you'd like to seize indicates the proper level in the air. "It is to be supported by square columns, so thick." And two dimply forearms endeavour to shape a proper

square between them. "The other shelf is to be so high." And the little hands fix a level in the air, just the height of the top of your head, and very near it. What does philosophy offer to compare with the delights of architecture?

After a week or two Catharine began to grow weary of hearing of Pergolino's daughter. She was almost beginning to believe in the mythical elopement herself, she said. I pointed out the many advantages of my innocuous status, and prayed that it be maintained a little longer. Catharine promised that it should be. But one day Lucile appeared more tardily than usual, and informed me that she knew the real story of my flight to San Antonio. Catharine had told her everything that she considered it necessary to tell. I feared that Lucile would reform again, now, and Catharine and I would have to communicate our architectural plans by glances. My fears were groundless: for with the exploding of that romantic myth I had become so uninteresting to Lucile that I seemed more innocuous than ever. The delays grew longer, and Catharine and I continued our planning without interference.

Of course Lucile informed everybody about my exploit, and for a time I half expected the sheriff to call on me with handcuffs. But nobody cared in the least about the legal aspect of my performance. Mr. Mar-

shall suggested that there might be more money in the jail-delivery business than in teaching philosophy; and a judge of a superior court, whom I met at the Utrisque Club, advised me to apply to my Representative for a special appropriation to reimburse me for the cost of repatriating an undesirable alien, who had been a dead weight upon the State Treasury. These little banterings soon subsided. The episode of Jørgen Bjerg lived only in the relation between Catharine and me.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE HOUSE OF VAIN HOPES

VACATION had come, and still the process of construction was going on. It had become old custom with me to take my rest on a canvas cot among carpenters' benches and plasterers' scaffolds, in a room open at one end to the night winds and the mosquitoes. In its essentials, however, my house had fixed its shape. The main body of the house was very long and low; we had ripped out first one end and lengthened the house by thirty feet: later, it didn't seem long enough, so we ripped out the other end for an equal extension. On the side away from the road, which was still to be the front of the house, we added two long wings. These, with the dense foliage of the oak tree, now almost in line with the ends of the wings, gave the effect of an enclosed court. We ran an arcaded gallery all the way around the three sides of the court. There had been an old mission down the river which had fallen into private hands. As it was out of the path of tourists, it afforded its owner no revenue; accordingly, he was pulling it down for the stone. At their cost as raw stone, I secured from him a score of short stone columns, turned at the ends and with spiral flutings, coloured a dull amber by two hundred years

of exposure to the Texas sun. With these columns supporting the arches of my gallery, the court assumed a quaint monastic air that charmed even Lucile, who had disapproved violently of the plan of a gallery. I secured also the heavy black bodark doors of the old mission. They were very big, but I had an opening knocked in the front wall large enough to receive them. The panels contained troops of saints in low relief. The beating rains had softened and confused the outlines of the carving, so that what remained was just a gentle suggestion of illimitable piety done in wood. Lucile condemned the doors unqualifiedly, and even this failed at first to win Catharine's approval. But I loved the doors and put them in. I was developing architectural obstinacies of my own.

The living-room was completed, and its like was never seen. It was very long and high, wainscoted in white wood to the height of Catharine's head. Above, the white woodwork cut the wall into small panels, floored with a paper of light azure, and, in the centre of each panel, a nymph cut from a delicate pink Botticelli print. Horribly expensive those prints are when you buy them for wall-paper. I shouldered the responsibility, and Catharine cut out the figures, with her demure air of maiden impartiality. Lucile declared that the idea was almost scandalous; imagine its springing from the mind of a sedate professor! I had, how-

ever, lectured to her on the theory of multiple personalities, and so she thought she understood me.

As the reader will have inferred, my ten thousand dollars was very nearly exhausted, and most of the house was still unfinished. Like Lucile, Catharine developed new ideas every time she came to see the house; and Lucile and Catharine visited it nearly every day. Catharine was a mere child, so her ideas were not so expensive as Lucile's. They ranged in cost from a minimum of fifty dollars to a maximum of two hundred dollars. Like Lucile, she had great courage in condemning her mistaken ideas, after they had been realised in wood or stone, and great zeal in having them corrected. I quickly learned that there was no profit in defending an early idea of Catharine's against a later one. At least, not until the substitution had already been made.

And now, I will confess, misgivings were beginning to find a harbour in my colourless, academic soul. Catharine was so firmly convinced that this was to be her house that I began to be convinced of it myself. And in the bright mornings I accepted the conviction with a sort of palpitating enthusiasm. But at night, when man, for his sins, is forced to cast up his accounts, I spent many sleepless hours reflecting upon the grave mistake society had made in not endowing me more adequately.

I considered the case of my friend Doby, originally six times as well endowed financially as I. There was a constantly recurring wrinkle on his brow that signified to the observant eye the dollar sign—or rather, the sign of the minus-dollar. Sometimes I read, through Doby's brave domestic mask, a desire for money that was quite appalling.

For Lucile was the sworn enemy of money, and wonderfully effective in banishing it from her vicinity. Not that she would not have spurts of economy, and scrutinise the meat bills severely for weeks. Sometimes she would catch the butcher in an overcharge of a few cents, and then you would have supposed, from her account of it, that Doby had been snatched away from bankruptcy. But there were so many absolutely necessary things that had to be purchased, and those necessaries had a frightful habit of averaging a hundred dollars each.

Catharine also had her necessaries, besides the new ideas that were going into my house. Just now she was conducting a campaign which had for its object the acquisition of a magnificent thoroughbred filly, to be had for the small sum of fifteen hundred dollars. Whatever subject was under discussion, evenings, at Doby's, Catharine would manage to work in the excellent qualities of that filly. And I could see the minus-dollar-mark deepen on Doby's face.

My rôle of clandestine fiancé was growing heavy upon my conscience. Doby and Lucile were such very good friends of mine, it was downright treachery to dupe them longer.

“Catharine,” I said one day, “if I had a beautiful daughter like you, and an unprepossessing person like me, practically devoid of means to maintain her properly, set about making himself my son-in-law, I’d feel I had a moral right to the option of running him out of the state.”

“There it is again,” exclaimed Catharine with adorable impatience. “In the first place, you aren’t unprepossessing, to me, and I’m the only person who has a right to judge. In the second place, I don’t care whether you are poor or not. Neither does Father. And Mother still less. We’re none of us mercenary.”

“I know that very well,” I replied. “That is one of the things that makes yours the most adorable family I ever knew. But really, don’t you think it would be more honourable in me to inform your father what is going on?”

“No, indeed. He’d tell Mamma. And I positively promised her I wouldn’t be engaged until my nineteenth birthday.”

“But you are engaged, already.”

“Of course I am. But what difference does it make, so long as she doesn’t know it?”

“And what difference would it make if she did?”

“Mamma says, the moment I’m engaged, her hair will begin to turn grey. And so I promised her not to become engaged before my nineteenth birthday.”

“Her hair isn’t turning grey yet.”

“Of course it isn’t. But that’s because she doesn’t know. Now please don’t tease me about this any more.”

“All right.”

“And don’t you be worrying about money. Father never worries, and he has to provide for Mamma as well as for me. All you’ll have to provide for will be me.”

“Are you so sure he never worries, Catharine?”

“Why, yes,” she replied, looking up in surprise. “You don’t think he worries?”

“Have you never noticed how old and drawn his face looks, at times?”

“It does, sometimes,” admitted Catharine.

“Have you never noticed that little, crooked wrinkle on his brow? That means, worrying about money.”

“That wrinkle is always there,” said Catharine incredulously. “He must be worrying about money all the time.”

“He is.”

“You don’t mean to say that Father can’t get all the money he needs?”

“Not enough for you and your mother. I doubt that poor Doby has had one good night’s sleep since I first met him.”

“This is horrible,” said Catharine remorsefully. “When we are married, you must always tell me all about your affairs, so I sha’n’t ask you for things you can’t afford to buy.”

“Dear Catharine, I never will. I will get all the money I can, and toss about, sleepless, trying to find a way to get more. I’ll become adept at devising explanations for my yellow appearance in the morning; I’ll drink, to find a valid excuse for nerves and loss of appetite. That is what your father has been doing for years. You and your mother never see through the little deception. You spend, and are happy. As for Doby, he probably wouldn’t mind dying, if he could afford it.”

“It’s horrible,” repeated Catharine. “I have worried a great deal about Father’s health. Mother and I may have been cruel to him, but we never meant to be. That is why I want you to promise me, always to tell me the truth about your affairs.”

“I never will, Catharine. If I haven’t the money to gratify your desires, I’ll assume a bearish air and say: ‘What, another evening gown? The vanity of the modern woman is something incomprehensible. You are already well-enough dressed to please your husband. I have a better use for money than subsi-

dising dressmaking grafters.' You will hate me, but hate can't remain long in a breast like yours without a reaction to its opposite. You will sigh and say, 'Edward is such a brute—but I love him.' To love a brute is a virtue as well as an indulgence. But if I'd say, 'Dear Catharine, I'd love to have you get a new gown, but I really can't afford it,' you'd pity me. Pity doesn't last for ever; it produces its reaction, contempt. Just say to yourself, 'Poor Edward, poor Edward,' a dozen times, and see how your very intonation will change, from pity to contempt."

"I don't believe that is true at all," asserted Catharine stoutly. "Poor Edward. Poor Edward. Poor Edward——"

"Time to stop, Catharine. You see what I just said is true. Your intonation did change."

"It didn't," declared Catharine. "At least, I didn't intend it to change."

"They never do intend it, Catharine. It changes just the same. And so, let it be agreed; for most of my life you are to keep me in a ghastly state of financial instability. In return for which you are to love me."

Catharine sighed. "You don't make very alluring forecasts, for a lover."

"No. For a lover, a philosopher is at a terrible disadvantage. He can see only the truth, and has to speak it."

“I’m going to reform,” said Catharine, smiling sadly. “Father isn’t going to be made to worry by me, anyway.”

“What about that filly?” I asked, with the tone of one who is changing the subject. “Do you think you will get her?”

“The filly? Oh, yes! Edward, Father just won’t allow me to ride that horrid old mustang any longer.”

“Had you thought of the price of it?” I asked.

“It’s awfully cheap,” said Catharine, perceiving my drift. “Only fifteen hundred dollars. Father surely can’t worry much about that.”

“What are you two talking about so seriously?” demanded Lucile, coming upon us suddenly.

“We’re trying to find a name for his house,” said Catharine calmly.

“It’s time; you really ought to give it a name, Mr. Gresham.”

“Yes,” I replied. “I’m going to call it ‘The House of Vain Hopes.’”

“Oh, I don’t like that name at all!” exclaimed Lucile.

“It’s a horrid name,” agreed Catharine. “I’ll find it a better one.”

“Do,” I said. “But whatever you call it, the name I have given it will remain its real name.”

CHAPTER XXVI

A GOLDEN DREAM

WHEN I first knew Doby he was carrying on a speculation of a kind that is common in Asuncion, and I believe in other parts of Texas as well. He had inherited from his father a considerable tract of land, down in Gonzales County. This plantation he had traded for another; he had traded his new acquisition for a third, and so on. How often he had changed the situs of his investment, I don't know: Doby doesn't know himself. In my first year at Asuncion, however, he traded plantations four times.

This form of speculation, in which no money changes hands, seemed to me at first peculiarly barren. But I soon discovered that there were men in Asuncion who had grown rich by it. You trade a plantation for one a little better. Then you trade again, for one still better. This you trade for two plantations, each worth more than half your third holding. Starting a new series with each of your two plantations, you work each plantation up to the point where it subdivides again. Thus, under an expert hand, plantations breed plantations at a remarkable rate.

It is of course possible to reverse the process. You

may start with a string of plantations, and trade yourself down to the vanishing point. But this is none the less a beneficent form of speculation, as the reader has no doubt already concluded. For whatever one trader may lose, another is sure to gain.

Doby was one who had, on the whole, traded on the downward curve. The land he had originally possessed in Gonzales County would easily have commanded one hundred thousand dollars at the time when I first knew of his speculations. The land he then had, in the upland north of Asuncion, was certainly not worth ten thousand dollars, although, for consistency, he carried it on his books at seventy-five thousand dollars, the appraised value of his Gonzales holdings ten years before. In the four trades that I had observed, the value of Doby's property diminished by one-half, according to Mr. Marshall's very reliable estimate. Of course, Doby still called it worth seventy-five thousand dollars; but this was no bar to further trading, for there were plenty of poorer estates held at even higher valuations that had been established in a similar manner. Doby realised that his speculations were not turning out well; and it racked one's sympathies cruelly to observe his face, contracting and turning grey under one's eyes, as he surveyed a newly acquired domain of cactus and Spanish bayonet, with not enough forage growing on it to maintain the rodents with which it was infested.

But once you have entered into this fascinating sort of speculation, it is beyond the power of private resolution to pull you out of it. And there was no longer much reason why Doby should stop trading. He had very little to lose, and, of course, everything to gain.

Doby, most generous and least mercenary of men, yearned for wealth with all his soul. With the fatuousness of an academic philosopher, I at first set that fact down to his discredit. Had I ever yearned for wealth? No, indeed, my yearnings had been directed toward higher values.

But now I had come really to know those higher values in the field of concrete reality. All of them that were not counterfeit were, for me, bound up in Catharine's gracious personality. And if these values were ever to cease hovering before me tantalisingly, torturingly,—a source of delight by day, when one is strong, a source of despair by night when one is weak,—I must have money. Great quantities I needed if beauty and truth and serenity and hope and whatever else gives value to life were not to remain cheap abstractions to me, as they had been before I knew Catharine. Catharine had made a man of me: therefore, my soul thirsted for money. And now I'm philosophising, let me express my conviction that, if we moderns thirst more for gold than those of old time, it is because we

are more truly men. We desire more, we live more; and desire and life have golden roots.

But how should a college professor, on a scanty salary, with no property except a few parcels of more or less salable real estate, proceed to slake such a thirst as this? I consulted Doby very cautiously, and he suggested trading. If Doby, however, with his in-born knowledge of the game, and a whole fistful of high honours to begin with, had been so completely cleaned out, what could I hope to win, with my wretched little hand of three spots and four spots? I refused to sit in the game. But time was slipping away, and an unacknowledged despair was beginning to becloud my skies.

Early one morning Doby rang my bell. "Get your hat and come with me to my office," he said with suppressed excitement. "There's something in the wind."

"Have you had breakfast, Doby?" I demanded.

"No. I can't eat any breakfast; neither could you, if you had what I've got on my chest."

"Are you ill?" I inquired in alarm.

"No, I never felt so gay since Lucile accepted me. You'll feel gay, too. Come on!"

"I tell you, Gresham," said Doby as we set out for the trolley line, "I've stumbled onto the biggest proposition you ever saw. There's millions in it. And what's more, it's something you and I can handle. It don't

need much capital, and we ain't going to let anybody else in."

"What the deuce is it?" I demanded, beginning to grow excited myself.

"It's cedar," said Doby.

That did not make the matter much clearer to me. But on the car Doby gave me what sounded like a formal lecture on the cedar in Texas economy. I had always classified lectures on economics among the major ills of the flesh; but this discourse of Doby's was fascinating to me.

Much of Texas is grazing country, hence vast quantities of fence posts are necessary. The extension of telephone lines over the sparsely settled plains represents another big demand for posts. Finally, most Texas houses are set up on posts, to insure the free circulation of air, and to make it possible for the hogs to get under the house, to eat up the snakes and scorpions. For all these purposes a durable wood is required. Now there is no wood that will compare in durability with the native Texas cedar. It is practically imperishable. Doby said he had watched the demolition of a cedar log-house constructed before the fall of the Alamo. He hacked with an axe at the mudsills, and they were as red and sound as when they were first laid down.

This valuable wood is not widely distributed in

Texas. There are of course small "brakes" along the limestone banks of many of the rivers, and in cañons in the semi-arid regions. But the commercial supply all comes from a few large brakes, most of which are being exploited systematically by strong corporations. These brakes will all be cut over before many years, and the trees grow so slowly that it will be a century before they will produce commercial timber again.

Now, a client of Doby's, a cattleman, had reported to him the existence of a large body of this timber in Las Cruces County, which had not even been charted by the Forest Service. This brake lay on the great Las Cruces Cañon, about thirty miles from one of the chief railways in the state. It was twenty-five miles or more in length, and extended back from the cañon irregular distances, but would easily average a mile in depth on either side of the cañon. Doby's client had hunted antelope and lobos all through the brake, and testified that, for cedar, the timber was remarkably heavy. The land was all in private hands, and the owners were so land-poor that they would gladly sell the stumpage rights for ten or fifteen cents an acre.

"Stumpage rights?" I queried.

"Yes, the right to chop off everything that sticks out of the ground," interpreted Doby.

There were two clients in Doby's waiting-room, but

he dismissed them summarily and we retired to the private office. Doby swept the books and papers off one end of his long table, and drew up two chairs. We seated ourselves side by side, a pad of blank paper before each of us.

“Now let us do some figuring,” said Doby. “I’ve been all through these figures several times, but they’re more interesting than a novel: we’ll go through them again. Twenty-five miles long by two miles wide,—got that down?—that makes fifty square miles of timber. That’s thirty-two thousand acres. My client says the timber is very heavy: he estimates at least seventy-five trees to the acre. Call it fifty.” Doby paused to execute the multiplication. “That makes 1,600,000 trees. Now, it’s a mighty poor cedar tree that don’t make a log worth a dollar. These trees are big, and we can safely put them down at an average of two dollars. That makes \$3,200,000 gross. I’ve got some figures from the Escarpment Cedar Post Company—I was receiver for the concern once—which show that the actual cost of cutting the logs and getting them to the edge of the brake does not run more than fifteen per cent. of their value. We’ll put it at twenty per cent. Cut one-fifth out of our \$3,200,000,”—Doby paused to let me catch up with my computations,—“we have \$2,560,000 left. We’ll have to run in a narrow-gauge track to carry the logs to the railroad. Say we need fifty

miles of it: we can construct it easily at \$10,000 a mile. That makes half a million. Subtract the cost of the road, and we'll have \$2,060,000 left: \$1,030,000 apiece. Thunder, let's cut out the \$30,000: we can give that to the niggers. Now, what do you say? You and I rolling around in a million dollars each: how does that sound to you?"

"Like music, Doby! Golden music. But it's a dream. There's nothing in it."

"You've got the figures," said Doby decisively. "Go over them again."

"I don't doubt the arithmetic. But what I want to know is, how is it possible for so big a thing to lie around loose for you and me to pick up?"

"Texas is full of big things, if you only know how to look for them. You wouldn't suspect it, Gresham, but this country has got the most timid lot of business men you ever saw. Show them a little thing, and they run after it; show them a big thing, and they take to the woods."

"Doby, it's a mirage," I said pessimistically. "I'll tell you why I don't believe in it. In the first place, I can't see any danger in it; and in the second place, I want the money so badly. If your scheme involved nine chances of getting killed to one of getting out with the plunder, I'd believe in it. And I'd go in for it with enthusiasm."

"You want money, Gresham?" asked Doby in astonishment. "I never supposed you gave a hang for money."

"Doby, I'll challenge you to want money so desperately as I do at this minute. You can't do it."

"For myself," Doby said reflectively, "I don't care a hang for money. It's for Lucile and the baby. But you haven't got anybody to use it on."

I made no reply. "Oh, say, Gresham," said Doby, pushing back his chair and eying me penetratingly, "there is a lady somewhere."

"There is," I said.

"Well, old man," Doby said, putting his hand on my shoulder affectionately, "you shall have the money. Loads of money. We'll drink to the future Mrs. Gresham, and the money."

He unlocked a drawer in his desk and drew forth two little tumblers and a long bottle adorned with three thistle flowers, very green and pink and prickly. "You don't drink, Gresham. But you can drink to the future Mrs. Gresham. And if not, you can drink to the money. If you can't, it's because you don't know yet what money means. Or ladies, either."

I was still incredulous. A million and I? Two such opposites could hardly be got together in the same universe. The only thing that kept me from rejecting Doby's prospectus altogether was the thought that his

figures must be exaggerated. A quarter of a million, a tenth of a million, a twentieth—scale it down enough, and the impossibility gave way to a reasonable probability.

The next morning Doby and I took the A. & S. A. to San Antonio, where we picked up a civil engineer, named McConnel, whom Doby trusted, and continued our journey westward. All afternoon and all night we travelled. At eight o'clock we were put out into the bright West Texas morning at the station of Las Cruces. A wretched little town of fifteen or twenty frame shanties and adobe huts, all facing the road alongside the railway track. Most of them were devoted to the supplying of drink, for it was a very thirsty country, usually a desert. This year the rainfall had been heavy, and the undulating plain was all knee-deep in grass.

We secured horses, a supply of crackers and bacon, and three large jugs of water and set out to the northward. Doby and McConnel had rifles: we should devote perhaps a week or two to the exploration, and intended to live on the country. We rode all the morning through the long grass, seeing no sign whatever of cañon or cedar. About noon Doby, who was in the lead, halted and pointed with his arm to the northwest. We rode up to him and found ourselves on the edge of a tremendous cañon. The banks were sheer precipices,

six or seven hundred feet high. The cañon was half a mile wide and had a narrow blue stream in the middle of it. If you retired from its brink fifty feet, there was nothing at all to indicate a break in the plain.

We found a little patch of mesquite and dismounted to toast our bacon and make coffee. It was a thirsty morning, with the wind sweeping down from the dry plains to the northwest, but McConnel stinted us severely on our coffee. We had to husband our water. There was plenty of it in the cañon, but McConnel said we might not be able to get down to it for several days. McConnel talked little, and, as is the way with laconic men, what he said was usually disheartening.

After a brief rest we pushed on, along the edge of the cañon, and rode till nightfall. No practicable descent had presented itself. Before dark, however, we made out, in the distance, dark masses of vegetation fringing the cañon's lip. The first of the cedars that were to make our fortunes! We discovered a little wooded pocket, at the bottom of which was a pool of rain-water, somewhat green, but good enough for the horses and for coffee. There we camped for the night. Doby had shot an antelope and we managed to detach fragments of it to broil. It is a savoury meat, but civilised man lacks the facial equipment of bone and muscle needed to cope with it. But what more did we need than crackers to munch, with our promised land

just a few miles ahead! I proposed that we ride on by moonlight, but McConnell rejected the proposal. You couldn't be sure, he said, that your horse might not step off the edge and drop five or six hundred feet with you.

Early in the morning we trotted gaily toward our cedar brake. In a few minutes we were halted by a branch cañon, almost at right angles to the main one, which it seemed to surpass in width and depth.

"We'll have to go round this," said Doby.

"Or better, find a way down," said McConnell. "It may be a hundred miles long."

All forenoon we searched for a path leading down the sides of the cañon. At last we found one, well trodden by the hoofs of antelope and deer. It seemed satisfactory to Doby and McConnell, so we started to descend it. It was horribly steep, and I saw that I would surely slip off over my horse's head, so I dismounted and led him down. Doby advised me to stick to my horse's back, on account of the rattlesnakes that infest those West Texas cañons. I thought, however, that it was preferable to step on one than to light on it. As a matter of fact, no snakes molested us on our entire journey.

Once down in the cañon, it only remained to get up again. After four hours' search we found a practicable antelope path and mounted to the level of the plain.

We followed the branch back to its junction with the main cañon and camped for the night, half a mile nearer our goal than we had been twenty-four hours earlier. Doby had shot some kind of goat in the cañon—a wild one, according to his view, a domestic goat strayed away from some ranch, according to McConnel. Anyway, it was edible. I rolled up in my blanket and tried to sleep, but my spirits were too low. Under those terrible, searching stars of West Texas, you feel such a very insignificant dupe, with your dreams of infinite bliss.

“Doby,” I whispered, on the chance that he might not be so much asleep as he appeared to be. “How are you feeling?”

“Fine,” said Doby, with a counterfeit sleepy note.

“How about that million?”

“She’s there,” Doby replied cheerfully. “And she’s not going to get away.”

In the morning we rode on, and soon encountered cedar. Just a thin fringe on the cañon’s edge, for a while, but it grew wider as we progressed. And now the sides of the cañon became less precipitous; here and there long, steep slopes, like ladders, ran uninterruptedly from the brink to the very edge of the blue stream. Up these ladders of crumbling rock dwarfed cedar trees climbed bravely, the topmost ones waving their distorted branches in the free air of the plain. By nightfall, we

had penetrated the real brake. Here the cañon walls had quite disintegrated; little branch cañons ran in every direction; they were deep, but you could cross them almost at any point. Some of them were bare, others choked full of cedar trees. Such cedars, too! Doby and I measured one; it was twenty feet around. The tree was an overgrown dwarf, and its trunk looked more like a cone than a log; but what a quantity of marvellously grained cedar chests could be made out of it!

The next day we rode on through the brake, sometimes following the bed of the main cañon, sometimes ascending to the level of the plain, and surveying the black masses of cedar from above. All day we were clambering up and down the slopes of the branch cañons. We made frequent halts to examine more closely the character of the timber. We paced off what we considered to be an acre in heavy timber and counted the trees. Two hundred and nine merchantable logs. We paced off an acre in what we considered the thinnest timber that could be included in the brake: twenty-two logs. Yes, our estimate of an average of fifty logs was conservative.

We had made up our minds to explore the brake throughout its entire length, so next morning we rode on. The cañon walls became steeper; branch cañons became less frequent; the cedar belt dwindled again to a

thin fringe on the edge. We halted. A mile or more ahead the cedar fringe disappeared, the cañon walls were again perpendicular. In the distance the cañon vanished in the undulating plain, slinking its secret way toward the northwest. We had seen all the cedar on one side of the cañon, at least, and were abundantly satisfied. The million was there; we had only to put out our hands. This cedar, the slow creation of a thousand years, would soon be falling before our axes. I had once been a forest conservationist. That was before I had any merchantable timber to fell.

“Let us sit down and figure a bit,” said Doby. “McConnel, how much is it going to cost to run a spur in from the railroad to take out this cedar?”

McConnel sat down, and began to cast up sums. He had been jotting down figures ever since we entered the brake. It was a big task to put them together, and Doby and I smoked several impatient pipes while it was being executed.

“You see,” said McConnel, “my figures can be only a very rough approximation. It’s hard to figure, especially on the bridges. We’ll have to throw a bridge over that big branch cañon.”

“Yes, of course,” assented Doby.

“Then, we’ll have to cross five other branches, to handle the main body of timber. We can cross two

of them on trestles: there's plenty of timber here, and it ain't worth much as it stands."

"No," agreed Doby.

"I should say that it would cost about two million and a half to put in the spur. Just as likely a little under as over."

"Yes," said Doby stoically. There wasn't spirit in me to say anything.

"Half the timber, I should judge, is on the other side of the main cañon," continued McConnel mercilessly. "I can't give a valid opinion as to the cost of a spur on that side. You'd have to throw a bridge across the main cañon, and I suppose the country is cut up about in the same way as this. Better put down the two spurs at \$5,000,000."

"That's about what I figured it," said the heroic Doby. "Mr. McConnel," he continued, after a pause, "how much do you consider the timber in this brake is worth?"

"Oh, I'm not much of a judge of timber. But I should guess it would be worth about two or three millions."

"That's a big pile of money," said Doby reflectively, relighting his pipe. "But I reckon she'll stay there."

"I reckon she will," replied Mr. McConnel soberly, "unless she flies out."

CHAPTER XXVII

LANDLORD AND TENANT

WHEN Doby and I set out on our hunt for cedar, we left behind the official explanation that we were going down to Port Lavaca to fish for tarpon. Lucile and Catharine had been not a little vexed at our departure: they saw no reason why we should not have invited them to join in the expedition. Lucile dearly loved the water and her emotional description of the Gulf was such as would have shattered the firmest resolution not deeply rooted in money.

"If there's one thing I despise," said Doby brutally, "it's the man who takes a lot of women with him out to fish. Fish are mighty good and so are women, but they don't mix well."

"You and Mr. Gresham," said Lucile in exasperation, "you mix well enough with fish."

"We surely do," replied Doby serenely. "If we'd stay under water, we could mix in the best tarpon society."

So long as we were a group, Catharine maintained an air of neutrality. But when we were alone, she'd try to start a quarrel with me. And I'd retreat behind the breastwork of Doby's responsibility. This really

didn't avail me very well, and they were somewhat embittered au revours Doby and I had carried away with us.

Eight days after we left Asuncion, we arrived again in San Antonio, paid McConnel for his services, and got rid of his presence. I was never in my life so glad to see the last of any human being, although McConnel was a discreet person, and kept up a pretence of knowing nothing whatever of our original plans. To be forced to maintain a stiff upper lip unwaveringly for four days, when your dearest hopes have all been knocked to pieces, is an intolerable strain for any one. It was with something akin to joy that Doby and I dropped down on the dusty plush of the A. & S. A. car, and permitted ourselves to collapse in woe and weariness.

"There is one thing I want to say to you, Gresham," said Doby, rousing himself, as the last weary miles crept past the car window. "Don't ever say anything about cedar to Lucile or Catharine."

"I certainly had no intention of doing so."

"We've been licked. I've been married twenty years, Gresham, and I've learned one thing, anyway. Never let a woman know you've been licked. It don't do her any good; nor you, either."

I made no reply.

"It was the finest fishing we ever saw," said Doby

briskly, after a pause. "That tarpon you hooked and I played must have been seven feet and a half long. If you'd been a little more handy with the gaff, the sharks wouldn't have got him."

"No," I replied, uncertain what to do with my cue. "But what could you expect from a philosopher?"

"That will do pretty well," said Doby, approvingly. "Those Greek fishermen at Port Lavaca are queer characters. Brought up on the water, and don't know how to handle a boat. If I hadn't taken the boat away from him when that squall came on, we'd have been swept out into the Gulf."

"You know," I said meditatively, "I know so little about the water I didn't realise we were in danger at all."

"You'll do." Doby nodded his head. "You know, Gresham, for a professor, you're rather quick."

We sank back into our weariness. The conductor called: "Asuncion! All out." How hot and dusty, and old and stale and meaningless Main Street looked!

"I wish we could go to my office and rest up," said Doby. "But they know that this is the last train. We've got to take a brace, and go right out to my house. You'll have to come with me, today. But after this, for a week or two, don't call in the evening when I'm round. We're both pretty raw in spots, and it don't do any good to rub against each other."

Doby's domestic mask is a marvel: to see him at home that evening, you would have supposed he had had an uproariously good time. Lucile and Catharine remained a trifle cool. They rejected the tale of the seven-and-a-half-foot tarpon, and of the fierce gale that nearly swept us off to the Caribbean. What they believed was that we had spent most of our time on the quays of Port Lavaca, letting the Gulf breezes fan away the fumes of the strong drink dispensed in those horrid bars of Little Suez. The ladies' surmises were to me somewhat more embarrassing than the truth would have been, but Doby, with twenty years of married experience, didn't seem to share my concern. So I let his better judgment prevail. And in a week our fishing expedition had been forgotten, and we were completely forgiven.

Financial cares of a more petty nature were beginning to press upon me. My ten thousand dollars had been exhausted by the first of July, and there remained much work to be done before my house would be complete. Mr. Ellsworth had, however, agreed to finish the job. Hardware, paper, etc., he succeeded in charging to me, thus unloading on the merchants of Main Street part of the risk of carrying me. For the balance of the cost of finishing the house I gave him my notes for twenty-seven hundred and fifty dollars, due October 1. By that time I hoped to have funds

sufficient to clear off all my local debts; and Mr. Ellsworth assured me that he would not press me for payment, if I should find I needed a little more time. I wrote to a New York realty firm and commissioned them to sell for me a Long Island suburban tract, in which I had invested upon an agent's demonstration that it was better than a savings bank. I received a polite letter from the firm accepting my commission, and informing me that, while Long Island suburban property was very dull, they would do their best to find me a buyer.

September had come, and no remittance from New York. The bills from the Main Street merchants were beginning to be peremptory in tone, and my note to Mr. Ellsworth would soon be due. I began to develop a minus-dollar-mark on my brow, in spite of the admonitions of Catharine to follow her father's example in dismissing financial cares. We rode a good deal that summer, she on her new filly, which was a true joy; I on her old mustang, which was a true cross. I had bought it for sentimental reasons and in order to buy something from Doby, whose pockets were likely, in the dull summer season, to be quite devoid of change. I had learned to keep my hours of enjoyment fairly distinct from my hours of care. The latter, however, were now encroaching sadly upon the former. So I decided to set out for Missouri, to see if I couldn't sell my

other farm. I'd sell it cheap; it had not paid me any rent at all the preceding year, and it had drawn upon me for taxes and insurance money. It meant a great sacrifice to me to leave Ascuncion at that time, as Lucile had gone for a six weeks' rest in Colorado, leaving the house in the nominal charge of Lucile's aunt. Miss Allen was a corpulent person much more regardful of her duties of chaperonage than Lucile when that objectionable young fellow, who had once caused me much groundless woe, called, as he did very often. Miss Allen detested him about as thoroughly as her brother detested me. Her grievance against him was that he called at the time when she was sleepest, and she did not feel justified in napping while he was around. I timed my calls to coincide with his departure. She was nearly dead with sleep then, and would drop back in her chair and doze away even while I was making my inquiries about her health. She regarded me as wholly innocuous: a kind of big wooden doll that Catharine had not yet outgrown.

Doby had entreated me to keep Catharine from getting too lonely in her mother's absence, and I did my best to discharge the obligation with *éclat*. We rode every morning, and I called every afternoon and evening. A day in Asuncion was worth many farms in Missouri, according to my opinion. And Catharine was

more positive than I that I ought to fix such a scale of values. None the less, as my debts were growing peremptory, I packed my valise and set out for Missouri, commissioning Doby to open all my letters and telegraph me if any word came from the New York realty firm.

It was a hot afternoon when I alighted from the train at the little station of Vollmar, Missouri. Vollmar is just on the edge of the upland, overlooking a broad stretch of river bottom—then a sea of tasselled corn and golden sunflowers. The town boasts no hotel nor livery barn, but at the “general store” I found a slovenly Missourian, apparently worn to death by the tedium of his own society, who volunteered to drive me out to my place, which lay four or five miles back from the railway.

“Stackleberry’s been worryin’ that you might show up,” remarked my new acquaintance, with a gleam of pleasure as we drove up the dusty road toward the high prairie. Stackleberry was the name of my tenant. In itself it was sufficient to indicate the crookedness of his character.

“Wasn’t there any crop here last year?” I demanded.

“Good crop. Good cawn, fair oats, best wheat you ever see. Stackleberry had an awful good crop of cawn, and I reckon he kep’ it all.” He eyed me slyly.

It was the truth. But I saw no reason for expressing an opinion just now.

“Ol’ Jedge Mills, he sez, sez he, down to the store, ‘That man Stackleberry ought to be kicked off of Perfesser Gresham’s farm. Somebody ought to write to Perfesser Gresham.’”

I made no comment, and my obliging friend lapsed into silence.

“Here’s your place,” he said at length, drawing up before a dismantled gate. “No, thank ye, I won’t take nothin’. My hosses wasn’t workin’.” And he drove away in a cloud of dust.

In the four years since I had seen the place, it had certainly run down. A big apple tree by the gate had split at a crotch five feet above the ground; the weaker half lay prone upon the path to the house, its branches covered with shrivelled leaves and shrunken yellow fruit. A new path had been beaten around it through the currant bushes. As I took a hasty survey of the buildings I observed that a cottonwood tree had fallen across the hog house and broken its spine, months ago, no doubt, as there were no leaves upon the yellow branches. The yard was full of dogs, but they were too shiftless to bark. I approached my door unannounced and rapped vigorously.

There was a sound of heavy boots, and the door opened. My tenant, no doubt. He was a man of

middle age, bent and emaciated. In one arm he carried a shrivelled baby of six or eight months, bright-eyed and preternaturally active. Two little children, a girl of six and a boy of four, peered at me from behind the shelter of their father's overalls.

"Are you Mr. Stackleberry?" I asked. "I am Mr. Gresham."

He gazed at me as if not comprehending. "Oh," he said at last, dully. "The landlord."

"Yes," I replied.

"You won't find things lookin' as they ought to," said Stackleberry in a tone of dejection. "I've had awful bad luck."

"I'm sorry to hear it."

"Yes, my wife, she's been bed-tied ever since Christmas. I've got to be the woman in the house. My boy, Bert, he does the farmin'."

"In that case," I said, "I'll go on to a neighbour's and put up for the night. I'll look the place over in the morning."

"No, I can take care of ye, if you'll excuse man cookin'." He stepped out into the yard. "Sic' 'em, Buck."

A lean dog jumped out of his sleep and caught by the neck a young rooster, indolently doing a crow in pantomime. Stackleberry, still carrying the baby, took

the rooster by the head and whirled it until the body flew off.

“Supper will be ready purty soon. Ye’ll find my boy, Bert, down to the barn.”

Stackleberry’s boy, Bert, was a slender young fellow of seventeen, with sallow face and wistful eyes. An intelligent boy, with education sadly neglected. We walked over the place, and he told me the history of his summer’s labours in the field. An incredible amount of work he had performed, for a boy of his strength, but the fields were weedy, and the fences down. He would do better another year, when he would be “stouter.” If Ma should get well, Father could help with the work. But Ma would probably go, and Father would have to take care of the house.

As the sun was setting we returned to the house. Stackleberry led me into the living-room, where Mrs. Stackleberry lay on a lounge, covered with a cheap table-spread. She was very pale and wistful-eyed. I took her hand; it felt like a parcel of little human bones, done up loosely in a chamois-skin cover.

“I’m very sorry you disturbed yourself to see me,” I said. “There will be chance enough for us to get acquainted next time I come, when you are well again.”

She moved her head in a gesture of negation, and closed her eyes. I retreated to the yard, and walked

toward the orchard. A fine place to look for money, this nest of misery!

"Perfesser, come and have a bite," called Stackleberry's weary voice. I followed him to the kitchen, and seated myself at a long table, covered with frayed oil-cloth. Bert took his place beside me, with a locust branch in his hand, with which he endeavoured to keep the flies in motion.

"Will you ask a blessing, Perfesser?"

I hesitated. An uncommonly difficult thing to ask, is a blessing in such circumstances. Stackleberry placed his own interpretation upon my hesitation, and said grace himself, simply, eloquently. Could I have done so, I wonder, if the white figure on the sofa had been Catharine?

"The spare room is ready any time you're sleepy," said Stackleberry, as I rose from the table.

"I'm sleepy now," I said. I wanted to escape. The contrast between the sunlight and life and joy of Asuncion, and all this dingy woe, seemed almost to choke me. I put out my light and drew a chair up to an open window. The night was hot, even for one accustomed to Texas. Too hot for sleep. I couldn't have slept had it been cool, for my farm in Missouri has its own kind of night sounds, to which you must grow accustomed.

Most prominent of these was the katydid chorus in

a tree near my window. This sounded like a hundred small carpenters, filing their saws. Five or six snoring dogs were stretched out under the tree. Every half-hour one of them would start with a yelp from a bad dream and awaken all the others. A few random barks, and then the whole pack would yawn audibly and begin to snore again. In the room adjoining, where Stackleberry apparently had his family assembled, from time to time little Ben or little Mary would cry out shrilly, or the baby would wail fretfully. Or the faint voice of Mrs. Stackleberry would call: "Ben! Ben! I want a drink of water." And at each sound from the family Stackleberry's heavy boots would beat upon the floor, and I'd hear his voice, tired and gentle. Before morning it began to be hard for me to resist the temptation of slipping through the window and running away.

"I want to talk with you a little while this morning, Stackleberry," I said, as we finished our breakfast. "Can you come out with me to the locust tree? The breeze blows a little there."

"Yessir," said Stackleberry resignedly. Bert eyed us, visibly perturbed in spirit. "You come, too, Bert," I added.

"No," said Stackleberry. "Bert's got to go and water the stock." He preferred to be alone while reaching an understanding with his landlord.

“Stackleberry,” I said, as we seated ourselves on the dead grass under the tree, “you and your family are having about as horrible a time as I ever heard of.”

“Yessir. But we take what the Lord sends.”

“Do you sleep regularly with your boots on?”

“No. But I’ve had to, since she’s been sick. When you’re the woman in the house, you’ve got to do all those little things for the children she used to do. It ain’t no use to undress.”

“You probably get very little sleep?”

“A man who’s got to be the woman in the house don’t hardly know what sleep is. He don’t hardly know what it is to be awake. Sometimes I say to myself, ‘I’ve just been dreamin’,’ and then I say, ‘No, I’m awake.’ An’ I don’t hardly know which is which.”

“What are you doing for Mrs. Stackleberry? Have you a doctor?”

“Well, Mr. Perrish, who runs the harness store down to Vollmar, he used to be a doctor, but he quit because he couldn’t get no license. He was a mighty good doctor, and she has lots of faith in him. I tell him her symptoms, and he gives me perscriptions. It don’t do much good, though. I reckon she’s got to go.”

“Has he ever seen her?”

"No. He ain't got time to drive out."

"Stackleberry, you don't know, and he doesn't know, what's the matter with her. His prescriptions are worthless. What you ought to do is take her to a hospital in St. Louis."

"I ain't rich. It's hard to get the money for medicine. It's taken a mighty big lot of medicine to keep her where she is."

"Suppose I lend you the money?"

"Thank ye, Perfesser, but I won't borrow no money."

"Suppose I give it to you?"

"Thank ye, Perfesser, but you can't give me no money."

"Well, suppose you keep my share of the crop this year?"

"I thought that was what you was drivin' at," said Stackleberry, apparently without resentment. "I kep' your share last year."

"I wasn't driving at that. But, if you kept my share last year, why can't you take my money now? You can't let your wife die."

"I can't take your money. She wouldn't."

"Well," I said, rising, "you know your mind. Has Bert time to drive me back to town?"

"There was something else I wanted to say," said Stackleberry in a dull tone. "The neighbours, they

kep' sayin', 'What'll you do when Perfesser Gresham comes?' And I made up my mind what I'd do."

"And what was it?"

"I made up my mind to shoot you, soon as I laid eyes on you."

"Really?" I gazed at him in astonishment. For he appeared to be an uncommonly gentle, God-fearing man.

"I'm not just talkin'," he continued. "That's what I meant to do. Why, last night, when you was asleep in your room, I went and got my shot-gun, and I thought, should I or shouldn't I?"

This was just a bit startling. Was my tenant sane or not? He looked sane, anyway.

"Well, you didn't," I said. "But suppose you had. How would it have helped you?"

"I knew I would get into lots of trouble. But still I thought I'd do it."

"Do you still feel like doing it?" I demanded.

"No. I couldn't do it now. You know now I robbed you."

That didn't sound very logical to me at first, but as I examined his weary face I began to comprehend. He had been rehearsing the prospective interview with his landlord—accusation, defence; reproaches, excuses—until he had built me up as an enemy of unimaginable cruelty. Anything to escape that interview with me,

this was his chief need. Probably he was sane enough, now, and had dropped the project of beginning with me in a crusade of landlord extermination. Nevertheless, I felt impatient to get away. But Stackleberry detained me.

“I suppose you’re goin’ to put me off the place.”

“No.”

“If you sell out, any other landlord will kick me out. There ain’t a roof in this county where I could shelter my wife till she dies. She may go soon, but then again she may hang on for years.”

“I’m not going to sell out.”

“Old Judge Mills, he wants your place bad. He owns next to you, and your south eighty ’bout cuts his place in two. He says he thinks he can get your place for seven thousand dollars, but I heard his son say the old man would give twelve thousand dollars for it if he had to.”

“Suppose I sold it, and gave you enough money to get your family started in St. Louis. You and Bert could pick up jobs, and you could have your wife properly cared for. Would you take the money?”

“No, thank ye, Perfesser, I couldn’t touch it, no-how.”

“Then I won’t sell. Good-bye.”

“Old Judge Mills’s house is the last house on your

left as you drive into Vollmar," added Stackleberry as I climbed into the buggy.

We drove away rapidly, and a grove of hickories soon cut off the view of my farm. I was glad to see the last of it. That mixture of righteousness and criminality was somewhat uncanny.

"What did Father say to ye?" asked Bert anxiously.

"Something I didn't quite understand," I replied. "But I think we are pretty good friends now."

"Father ain't a bad man," said Bert with pathetic earnestness. "It mos' killed him to rob you of your share."

"Did he really intend to shoot me?" I demanded.

"I don' know. But I hid the shells. Father don' know where they are."

A great American social reformer, when she discovered how wretched were the rural folk from whom she derived her income, decided to be a party to such cruel exploitation no longer. So she took her money out of such investments and placed it elsewhere. When I first read her account of the transaction, it did not strike me as in any way illogical. Somehow, the incident cropped into my consciousness just now, in all its grim, unconscious humour. I had only to stop at Judge Mills's house, if I desired to wash my hands of Stackleberry, half insane with care, and all his unhappy, wistful-eyed family. Twelve months before I

might have done it: I couldn't now. For Catharine had made a man of me, and I knew the meaning of money.

At Vollmar I bade farewell to Bert, and set about finding some one from whom to borrow money. The only man in town who had money to lend was Judge Mills. So I called at his house, after all. A wan woman in a calico wrapper ushered me into an "office," where the old judge was sorting papers at a roll-top desk. He was a crusty old fellow, bald and half blind. When I explained who I was he screwed up his face to force his eyes to see me better.

"I s'pose you're trying to sell that old place of yours. Awful run down, scurcely worth anything."

"No," I said. "I don't want to sell it. I want to borrow money on it."

"Give you seven thousand dollars for it."

"I don't want to sell."

"Give you eight."

"It's not for sale."

"Give you nine." He scowled at me angrily.

"I'm not trying to sell it," I shouted.

"I'll give you ten for it," he shouted in turn, "and not one red cent more. Ten thousand in gold: pay you right here, to-day."

I wanted that gold, I confess. But I couldn't sell the Stackleberry miseries to this old griffon.

"I'm not going to sell the place, at any price," I

said firmly. "But I want to borrow four thousand dollars on it."

"Four thousand?" cried the old man in horror. "The security ain't worth it."

"You just offered me ten thousand dollars for it," I suggested.

"Yes, I know, but I ain't lending my own money. I lend for a non-resident party, and I can't be too careful. Still, I shouldn't wonder if he might let you have four thousand dollars."

"All right. Put me in touch with him."

"It's I do the lending," said Judge Mills with decision. "And I collect a commission of three per cent. on a three-year loan. I don't make any other kind of contract."

Of course it was his own money he was handling. Any one could see that this was just a device for evading the usury laws. Still I had to have the money.

"Very well," I said. "Fix up the papers and let me have the money."

"You can't get the money today. Nor tomorrow. You've got to make out an application first. Then you've got to have a new abstract of title. If you wish it, I'll attend to that. It'll cost you about seventy-five dollars."

"Let's have the application. If I can't get the money soon, I'll have you remit it to me at Asuncion."

“There will be a charge for exchange,” said Judge Mills.

“Of course,” I said.

“And you’ve got to increase your insurance on the buildings. You’ve got one thousand dollars; they’ll carry three thousand dollars more in the company I write for. Three years, seventy-three dollars and fifty cents.”

“All right,” I said, executing my signature. “When will I get the money?”

“I don’t know. Maybe in a month, maybe in ninety days. Those lawyers work mighty slow. Your interest begins today, though.”

I felt inclined to tear up my application. But I had to get some money; and I saw no way in which I could get it more promptly. There was really nothing to do but to submit to the old rascal’s exactions.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE DEUCE TO PAY

THE train was late, as usual, and it was mid-afternoon when I descended the car steps at Asuncion. The station was almost deserted; even the negroes and Mexicans, who usually lounged about in hope of picking up a chance two-bits from a passenger, had been forced to seek better shelter from the heat than the station afforded. I repeated to myself the Texan injunction, "Keep on the shady side of the street." Vain injunction! There was no shady side. The sun stood so high in the heavens that it searched out every nook and cranny and fired it white hot. "Now is the time I disprove the stock Texan lie, 'Men never are sun-struck here,'" I thought, as I lugged my bag over the scorching flagstones.

I seemed to be growing dizzy and faint, but this was an illusion: it was merely the effect upon my eyes of the air aquiver under the blaze of the sun. I quickened my pace. It would be a great relief to get the moral support of Doby's presence, after my wretched expedition. And just conceivably he might have a letter for me from New York.

I found Doby's waiting-room empty and disordered. I rapped on the door of his private office. "I'm back, Doby!" I shouted.

There was a sound as of an avalanche of books and papers. After some moments a heavy step crossed and recrossed the office floor. "Doby must be away," I thought. "He wouldn't keep me waiting like this." I was mistaken, however, for after some minutes the door opened and Doby's face appeared. He was pale and shaggy, and his clothes were dusty and mussed. "Drink," was my mental comment. "Drinking under such a sun!"

"It's you," he said gruffly, throwing the door open and backing away to his chair. "Come in. Close the door."

"Why, Doby," I said, "what ails you? Chills?"

"No, I'm all right." There was a peculiar resonance in his voice, and a fixity in his glance that were somehow disquieting.

"Is Catharine well?"

"Oh, yes, Catharine's well!"

"What do you hear from Lucile?"

"Well, Gresham" (still more resonantly), "Lucile appears to be a bit lonely."

"Lonely? Now, Doby, it's time you two grew up. Pity you can't be separated for a few weeks without pining away. You look like a wreck."

“Perhaps.” And he turned his long profile to me, as an indication that we had exhausted the subject.

“Any letters for me, Doby?”

“Yes,” said Doby, very deliberately, “you have a letter from Lucile.”

“A letter from Lucile? Well, I’m greatly honoured.”

“You well may be,” replied Doby with dignity. “Here it is.” And he threw me an envelope—such a bulky one! Three red stamps on its blue face bore testimony to its significance. I drew the letter from the envelope. No date, no formula of address. “Under the pale Colorado moon I’ve been thinking of you,” it began. “Some monstrous error,” I said to myself and turned to the end. No signature. But the letter ended with a poem, the last lines of which appeared to read:

“Then all my dreams upon the drowsy tides
Go drifting, love, to thee.”

I looked again at the envelope. There could be no doubt that the letter was addressed to me. Why, in Heaven’s name, I pondered, did Lucile do such a thing as that? Oh, what folly we moderns are guilty of, that we teach women to write! Vote? Why, let them, if they like; but write—behold the result. This letter of Lucile’s—just an exercise in composition to her; but

what a black disaster to an innocent bystander like me!

My reflections were soon broken by a resonant "Well?"

"I'm ashamed to confess, Doby, I can't read this letter. It's a beautiful hand, but I'm accustomed to the round characters of the North. You read it to me, please."

Doby straightened himself up. "I'll be——" Then controlling himself, and assuming the air of a man who balks at nothing: "Very well, as you please. I shall have something to add, myself, later." And, thrusting out his chest and clenching one fist, wherewith to emphasise telling passages, he began sonorously:

"Under the pale Colorado moon I've been thinking of you," and Doby beat his desk with his fist. "The rose you plucked for me that day (do you remember?)——"

I won't transcribe any more of that letter. I've forgotten most of it, and I'm trying hard to forget the rest. I shall never forget the ghastly feeling I experienced as Doby read on, emphasising the "yous" and "loves" with his fist. It was the same all through, down to the glowing poem at the end. Not her poem, by any means, I judged. Not a published poem, either; it could never have found a publisher. Some effusion addressed to Lucile long ago, when she was a blooming maiden and I a boy in knickerbockers—

some moonstruck Baltimore lover's masterpiece, now resurrected to my destruction.

“Then all my dreams upon the drowsy tides
Go drifting, love, to thee.”

(Doby was roaring now.)

“Is that all?” I inquired meekly.

“*That* is all!” shouted Doby. “And what have you got to say?”

“Why, only, when are you going to kill me?”

“You talk as if Ah wuh a common muhderer,” replied Doby scornfully, lapsing into Southern gentleman accent. “You ah going to have a chance to defend yo’self.”

“Yes, but, Doby, what does that amount to? You can shoot, and I can’t. It’ll just be a killing, and you might as well tell me when you are going to do it, so as to give me a chance to arrange my affairs. You’re my lawyer; draw me up a will. I don’t care much what becomes of my effects, but I’ve got some debts to bequeath to somebody.”

“Mr. Gresham, this is a serious matter,” said Doby sternly.

“Devilish serious,” I agreed. “Can’t you see how I’m quaking?” (I truly was.) “As a former friend, don’t you think you ought to offer me a drink?”

Doby hesitated. The rules of the ancient game of

life and death at a lady's whim seemed not to cover the case of such a request. To give a drink is an act of friendship. But Doby had never yet rejected a petition for a drink. His natural generosity prevailed, and he drew from his drawer his famous flask of "Three Thistles." I put it to my lips and took the longest pull a man ever took without swallowing. I needed time to think. Never before had I needed it so badly.

My lips could stand the vitriol no longer: the reprieve was at an end. "Thanks, Doby," I said, "I feel vastly better. Take a swallow yourself. We've got serious work to do before we retire to settle this matter. We must manage so that Lucile's name won't be dragged into the affair."

"I don't know about that. She deserves punishment as much as you."

"Doby, take the advice of one who'll soon be a very impartial spectator: don't be too hard on Lucile. You can't tell from that letter whether she meant anything or not. I can't. At first I thought she did, and I confess I was pretty much flattered. I'm in doubt now."

"Hell, man, in doubt?" Doby roared. "'Go drifting, love, to thee.' What about that?"

"Lucile didn't write that poem; she just copied it into the letter. 'My dreams upon the drowsy tides'—you can't write of drowsy tides in Colorado. It's an

old poem, probably one you wrote yourself when you were courting her on Chesapeake Bay."

"No, I never wrote it. At least, I have no recollection of writing it.—But how about all that other gush?"

"Do you remember, Doby, all that gush I heard you pouring into the ears of the Dean of Women at the President's reception last spring?"

"Gresham, sometimes I think you are a damned fool. Do you suppose I meant it? Are you accusing me of making love to the Dean of Women? It couldn't be done. She's fifty, and looks sixty. Did you ever take a look at her?"

"Doby, did you ever take a look at me? Take one, and tell me how much did Lucile mean?" And I assumed the expression I wear when I am photographed.

Doby turned his eyes upon me, critically. I waited. The inspection continued interminably, but Doby was evidently struggling with himself.

"Don't you think the joke is on Lucile?" I inquired cautiously.

Doby looked frightfully serious for a moment, then yielded to uncontrollable laughter. "Gresham," he said at last, "I suppose I've got to kill you, but I can't be very mad at you."

"You ain't a liar, Gresham," said Doby after a long pause. "But I reckon, in a case of this kind, you've got to lie."

“Of course I’d lie if I had to,” I replied, “but I don’t see why I have to.”

“You’d say there ain’t anything in it, whether there is or not.”

“To be sure I would.”

“I’d like to see, though, how the devil you’d explain that letter. You’re such an infernal Jesuit, I reckon you could do it without lying. But I’d kind of like to see you do it.”

“I don’t know that I care to do it,” I said wearily. “I didn’t get a red cent out of Missouri. Did you get anything for me from New York?”

“No; I’m mighty sorry. But this letter of Lucile’s: what’s your hypothesis, anyway?”

“Well,” I said reflectively. “Lucile, as you know best, is a very temperate person.”

“She is. She’s got to be. It goes to her head. Why, Gresham, one time, when she’d had just one table-spoonful——”

“In her letter,” I interrupted, “she says she is a guest of the Warrens. Now, you know, and I know, old Colonel Warren won’t tolerate any teetotalism in his house.”

“You mean, Lucile was drunk?” demanded Doby, with a great show of indignation, which failed, however, to conceal his relief.

“Oh, dear, no! Just a little unsettled, perhaps.

You know how a bit of this Three Thistles gives you a feeling of friendliness toward all the world. You can't quite be held to the contracts you make under its benign influence. You know this just as well as I do. Better."

"I'll admit, when it's in me, I do sometimes *say* fool things. But I don't *write* them."

"Merely the difference between a man and a woman. A man will say what he never would write: a woman will write what she would never say."

"Yes," said Doby doubtfully.

"Your own experience as a man of the world will prove it." I was probing for his nerve of gallant gentleman.

"It does, as a fact," Doby answered, smiling. "Lucile got hold of one of those letters once." He opened his drawer and took a swallow of Three Thistles. "Well, Gresham, you're right, Lucile was drunk. That's all there's to it."

"Not drunk, Doby," I protested. "Unsettled just a little."

"Drunk, Gresham, dead drunk. I felt from the beginning there must be some explanation of that letter." Doby chuckled. "I don't want to be impolite, Gresham, but I must say she was pretty far gone to write such a letter to you."

"Thank you," I said, affecting acerbity.

“You ain’t just the man for the ladies to run wild over,” said Doby, with another critical look.

“I’ve known that for a number of years.”

“You’ve got a pretty good head, and you know your books well,” continued Doby patronisingly. “But the ladies don’t care much for that sort of thing.”

“No, God bless them, they don’t. Let’s not harp on it, though: it’s rather a sore point with me.”

“Now, I tell you, Gresham. It ain’t your looks: many a worse looking man has cut a figure with the fair sex. You’re maybe a little unpromising as a partner at a dance” (and Doby suppressed a smile). “But it ain’t that. It’s something about the kind of small talk you use. You’re all right with men. But I declare, when you talk to women, you never use words less than six feet long.”

“Oh, yes, I know,” I replied despondingly. “But I’m too old to learn.”

“Do you want this letter?” asked Doby. “Of course it really belongs to you. But I’d like to keep it. We’ll have a bully comedy when Lucile gets back.”

“You may keep it, Doby, if you like. But, for Heaven’s sake, don’t ever let Lucile know you have it. Or have seen it.”

“Why not?” demanded Doby.

“If you do, she’ll think I showed it to you, out of vainglory.”

"Nonsense," said Doby. "I'd explain how I came to lay hands on it."

"That won't do the least good. That you have seen it is a capital charge against me, for which there can be no defence."

"You talk as if you thought you understood women," said Doby with a superior smile.

"I don't think I do. I know I don't. But if you let Lucile suspect you've seen this letter, there will be trouble for me."

"I think I know Lucile pretty well," said Doby. "She's got an exquisite sense of humour, and she'd see the joke just as well as you or I. Still, it's your letter, and if you say I haven't seen it, I haven't. That's all."

"Now I'm going home," I said. "I'll call on you and Catharine this evening."

"Do. Come early. I may not be out till rather late, but Catharine will be glad to see you. It seems to me she's missed you."

"That's very gratifying."

"Catharine is a mighty sensible girl," boasted Doby. "You'd suppose that at her age she'd be thinking of nothing but lovers. But honestly, Gresham, I don't believe such a thing ever enters her head."

CHAPTER XXIX

PATRIA POTESTAS

WHEN I left Doby, he was in quite exuberant spirits. I was not. I had not recovered from the shock of Lucile's letter. I had succeeded in escaping the physical destruction that it threatened, but that I had exhausted all its possibilities for evil I very much doubted.

Besides, the burden of secrecy was weighing upon me more heavily than ever. To live in daily association with Doby and Lucile, as the recipient of all their confidences, while plotting to carry their daughter off into a poverty-stricken marriage—this was hideous treachery, if you examined it rationally. The only justification for my duplicity was that nothing would ever come of the project. Catharine would tire of my prosy presence long before it really became necessary to say anything at all to Doby and Lucile. This escape from the difficulty, however, was desperately depressing to contemplate. As I entered my own gate and cast my eyes over the long white wall and low roof of my house, an acute feeling of loss already suffered came over me. Oh, House of Vain Hopes!

I walked slowly around the house to the court. Instantly my gloomy forebodings vanished, for there was

Catharine, discoursing eagerly with the somnolent Miss Allen. The sight of Catharine always drove everything else out of my mind. The present contained Catharine; what did the future matter?

They had not noticed my approach. I stood still for a few minutes, to contemplate the light on Catharine's hair, the glow of her cheek, the expression of animation in her whole figure. More worth losing than any other worth winning.

"Good evening," I said at length.

Catharine started, and Miss Allen turned her face toward me indifferently. "Oh, you're back!" cried Catharine, giving me her hand.

"Yes, thank Heaven. I hadn't anticipated this pleasure."

"Catharine has dragged me over here every day you've been gone," said Miss Allen, with an air of martyrdom.

"Oh, I have the loveliest plans for improving your grounds," cried Catharine enthusiastically. "I'm going to have you take all these ragged old rose-bushes out of this court, and grade it down to a perfect level and cover it with Bermuda grass. And there are to be four palms—date palms—with leaves like plumes, and eight clumps of roses, in little circles like this"—and she drew a circle with her white-slipped foot. "They are to be here—and here—and here," and she tripped

gaily about the court. "They're all to be Etoile de France, and they're to climb on little circular trellises, painted green."

"That will be very beautiful," I exclaimed, catching her enthusiasm.

"That's only the beginning of my plan," continued Catharine. "Come, see what I want you to do with the banks of the stream." She ran around the wing of the house, and I followed at as rapid a pace as dignity allowed. Miss Allen trudged asthmatically after us.

"Come over this evening right after dinner," said Catharine as I joined her on the bank of the stream. "Aunty didn't sleep last night, and she won't be able to keep her eyes open a minute after she has dined."

"Glorious!" I exclaimed.

"Catharine, where are you?" called Miss Allen over our heads. "I'm not going to take one step on that steep bank."

"We'll be back in a minute," Catharine answered. "Now, Mr. Gresham, I want you to put a dam across the stream down by that overhanging pecan. Do you see?"

"Yes," I said, somewhat dubiously.

"I love a little lake, with bays and islands, just like a tiny ocean."

"But the mosquitoes, Catharine," I objected. "Even as it is, the stream provides me with all I can handle."

“Oh, never mind the mosquitoes,” said Catharine impatiently. “All you have to do is to get used to them.”

“I’ve been doing my best,” I replied.

“Then, I’m going to have you clear away all the trees and rubbish on both sides of the lake. You’ll have to terrace the banks. The lowest terrace will be very narrow and nearly on a level with the water, and it is to be covered with elephant’s ears. A palisade of big green, glossy leaves, reflected in the water all the way around. Won’t that be magnificent?”

“Most magnificent!” I had never speculated on the æsthetic value of elephant’s ears before, but I was ready to accept it on faith.

“On the next terrace we’ll have clumps of Cape jessamines, dozens and dozens of them, enough to fill the whole house with their fragrance. It will just make you faint with joy when you enter the court.”

“I nearly did that a little while ago, without the Cape jessamines.”

“Don’t try to make pretty speeches now, Edward. You’re too tired. Besides, you must listen to my plans.”

“Catharine!” called Miss Allen impatiently. “Come, child, we must go home. It’s time to dress for dinner.”

The house was completed, but Catharine’s ideas had

found a new soil to grow in. Was it not a sweet and gracious thing for her to occupy herself in my absence with plans for beautifying my grounds? I'd need to raise a little more money, but what of it? I went to my study and addressed a note to Judge Mills, Vollmar, Missouri, asking him to change the mortgage from four thousand dollars to five thousand dollars. That might not suffice, but by the time this money was exhausted I ought to get three or four thousand out of that Long Island suburban property, "better than a savings bank."

When I made my appearance at Doby's, I found Catharine in the living-room, apparently alone. "We must be very quiet," she said in a low voice. "Poor Aunty is asleep." She pointed to a deep chair in a dim corner. The chair was turned toward the wall, and the high arm concealed the form of Catharine's faithful monitor. Only a foot, short and thick, peeping out from under the hem of a lavender skirt, gave visible evidence of Miss Allen's presence.

"It seems to me I have been gone a year," I said in a low tone.

"It doesn't seem so to me," Catharine replied. "But, then, I've been busy making plans."

"They seem to me very charming ones."

"Oh, those plans for the grounds. Aren't they lovely? But those weren't the ones I meant."

“What! Other plans? You must have been very busy.”

“You know, Edward,” said Catharine in a scarcely audible whisper, and turning her face toward Miss Allen’s chair, which was moving seismically. “Mamma doesn’t believe in long engagements. Neither do I.”

I made no reply. My tongue seemed frozen to my palate.

“I had been planning on June,” said Catharine. “But I’ve changed my mind.” She paused to listen to Miss Allen’s breathing.

She had been planning on June? I had never heard of it before. I had refused, myself, to think of any date. Drag dates into such a relation as ours, and one is lost. With dates, you have to face realities. Without them, you can view your joys under the aspect of eternity.

“June is a bad time for weddings in Texas,” said Catharine. “So I’ve decided on Christmas. Next Christmas.” She turned her face toward me, smiling. I wonder how the gallant knight of old set about it to throw himself at his lady’s feet? My soul executed the manœuvre now, but my body sat still, woodenly.

“You don’t seem to be very much interested,” said Catharine, with a shadow of disappointment upon her face.

“Dear Catharine, this is beyond my powers of ex-

pression. Make me one hundredth as happy, and I'd find a tongue to thank you. This strikes me dumb."

"I'll help you cultivate your powers of expression later on," said Catharine, smiling again. "But now we must return to my plans. Christmas is just the right time to start on a cruise to the Caribbean. We'll visit Trinidad and Curaçao—I don't know why, but I'm just dying to see Curaçao. And then we'll go on to Para and maybe we'll go up the Amazon. We'll spend a week at Rio, and perhaps go on and spend another at Buenos Aires. Then we'll have a long, long voyage to Lisbon. We'll go through Spain on muleback. Seville, Cordova, Toledo—don't you love those names? We'll ride across the Bridge of Toledo.—Is there a bridge at Toledo?"

I quoted:

*“Vraiment la reine eût près d'elle été laide,
Quand, vers le soir,
Elle passait sur le pont de Tolède——”*

Catharine shook her head. "I never can understand anything but English. But I'll learn lots of languages. We won't come back before October."

I said to myself: "I'll telegraph Judge Mills tonight he can have my farm. The money won't last eight months, but it will last a while. After that——"

“You’re thinking about your tedious old classes at the college,” said Catharine, assuming an air of vexation. “Aren’t you?”

“No, indeed! It never occurred to me to think of them at all.”

“Now you’re beginning to be sensible. I’ll have Grandfather make Mr. Brett give you a leave of absence.”

“It will be a bitter pill for your grandfather,” I said.

“Yes, won’t it?” And Catharine laughed so merrily that a great, creaking convulsion arose in the chair in the corner. A large round arm in lavender sleeve appeared over the green plush of the chair. Catharine and I held our breath, and the creaking subsided. The lavender arm slowly withdrew itself from sight.

“It will be pretty hard on your parents, too,” I suggested.

“Oh, yes, they’ll miss me terribly,” replied Catharine gaily. “But I’d have to be married, sooner or later. And we’ll be such close neighbours, Mamma and I can visit each other every day. Won’t that be lovely?”

“Yes, indeed. But that wasn’t exactly what I was thinking of. Maybe they won’t like the match.”

“What an idea!” exclaimed Catharine. “Papa is just devoted to you. And so is Mamma.”

“Not necessarily as a son-in-law,” I suggested mildly.

“Why not, I’d like to know?” demanded Catharine.

“First, because, as I’ve said many, many times, I’m poor.”

“I don’t want to hear another word,” said Catharine, putting her pretty hands to her ears. “Papa will be overjoyed. And so will Mamma.”

“Why not put your father to the test?” I asked. “I’ll tell him tonight.”

“No, you won’t,” said Catharine energetically. “Mamma isn’t to know till my birthday.”

“Which is October 8,” I said. “When does she return from Colorado?”

“October 7.”

“Your father can keep a secret one day,” I said. “And we’ll censor his letters.”

“I don’t see why you’re not satisfied with matters as they stand,” said Catharine a bit impatiently.

“Aren’t you happy enough?”

“Too happy.”

“Haven’t we had just the nicest time all these months? And do you suppose they would have let us alone so much if they had even suspected?”

“No.”

“There would have been parties and dances and what

not. Would you have wanted all that fuss made over us? ”

“ No. Of course not.”

“ They would have had to chaperon us every minute of the time. But they considered you just a sort of private tutor.”

“ Yes, that is where my difficulty lies. In a way, I’ve worked a monstrous game of deception on my good friend Doby. I love Doby, and it tortures me to deceive him.”

“ Of course, if you want to tell Father, I can’t forbid you,” said Catharine, rising.

“ Don’t be angry, Catharine,” I pleaded.

“ I’m not angry,” said Catharine. “ Father will soon be here. You may tell him, if you like.” And she made a little bow and left the room.

“ Come back, Catharine, and I’ll never mention the matter again,” I entreated as she paused in the doorway. She did not seem to hear. I thought she would soon return, but she was evidently more angry than she had seemed. An hour passed. At last I heard Doby’s steps in the hall.

“ Sorry I was detained, Gresham,” said Doby, throwing himself into the chair that Catharine had occupied. “ It’s mighty good to see you here again. Where’s Catharine? ” And he looked around the room.

“ Catharine and I have had a little quarrel. I of-

fended her, and she abandoned me to the tortures of a bad conscience."

"Well, now I wonder what you and Catharine can find to quarrel about?" said Doby, laughing. "Don't she accept your philosophy?"

"Doby, do you suppose Catharine and I have been talking philosophy all this year?"

"Hanged if I know what you and Catharine talk about," said Doby good-humouredly.

"You will be terribly shocked when I tell you, Doby. Catharine and I are planning to be married next Christmas."

Doby sat bolt upright. "The deuce you say," he gasped. I scanned his face anxiously. There was infinite perplexity in its mobile wrinklings, but no anger.

"How long has this thing been going on?" he asked at length.

"About eight months," I replied.

"Well, Gresham, you certainly are a damned Jesuit. But what beats me is Catharine. You'd have said Lucile should have been able to see through her."

"What are you going to do about it, Doby? Shoot me?"

"Shoot you? Well, I believe I ought to. But you couldn't have fooled us in that way, yourself. No, it was Catharine. Let us go into the library."

We resigned the living-room to the slumbers of Miss

Allen, and seated ourselves by Doby's hearth. I waited for Doby to open the discussion, but Doby was evidently waiting for me.

"The honest thing, Doby, would have been for me to tell you the moment I began to lose my head."

"Yes," said Doby. "But I reckon Catharine wouldn't let you."

"Whether Catharine approved or not, I should have told you."

"Oh, well, Gresham, be easy about that! I'm not blaming you, or Catharine, either. I never told old Allen, and he's never forgiven me."

"That was different," I said. "Old Allen is an alligator, but you are my good friend. I hadn't the least justification for deceiving you."

"Your deceiving me ain't what bothers me," said Doby. "It's the natural way, and the best way. But it's something else. Would you please pull open that top drawer behind you?"

I drew open the drawer. It was full of letters.

"Take out an armful of those letters."

I did so. They were unopened, and bore the letter heads of most of the business houses on Main Street.

"You might open some of them," said Doby. "I haven't had the heart to do it."

I opened one. It was a polite request to remit the sum of one hundred and forty-three dollars, as the

firm was closing its books. I opened another. It reminded Doby that his bill was long overdue, and threatened instant suit unless the sum of two hundred and twenty dollars were remitted before the Monday following. I glanced at the date. The bill was a month old. I opened other letters and noted the sums, \$82, \$447, \$64, \$560, so they ran. I put them back into the drawer.

"I think I understand you, Doby," I said.

"There ain't that much money in the State of Texas," said Doby gloomily. "And here's a bunch of bills that have come down from Colorado. Lucile said she wasn't going to spend any money there. They don't amount to much—about your year's salary."

Doby paused. "Don't think I'm criticising Lucile. She's the sweetest, best-hearted woman in the world. She never had the least idea of the value of money. It ain't in her. And I love her for it." Doby paused again.

"Catharine is just like her," he resumed. "She don't know the value of money, either. She don't want to know it, but she's got to have it. Just like Lucile. You see now, Gresham, why that cedar business nearly killed me."

"Yes. And you see why it nearly killed me."

"Poor boy," said Doby sympathetically. "I had no notion how hard it hit you. There'd be some money,

sooner or later, if it weren't for that infernal college of yours. Mr. Allen's giving it money all the time, and he makes no secret of the fact that it will get his estate. He says I ain't going to roll around in his money. If I'd die before he does, I reckon some of it would come to Lucile. I ain't against colleges, you understand, but it's pretty tough to have one in the family. Kind of a cuckoo's egg, you know."

I smiled feebly.

"I'm mighty sorry things are as they are," continued Doby. "I like you; Lucile likes you. I never thought you'd appeal in this way to Catharine, but I'm mighty proud of her for preferring a man like you to one of these young town yaps. But Catharine can't live without money, and you haven't got it. That's the God's truth, and I'm mighty sorry it's so."

"Doby," I said, "I know it, and I've known it from the beginning. I never considered I had any right to try to win Catharine. I've felt all the time that I was morally bound to break this engagement. I feel that now. But I can't do it. You and Lucile have a right to forbid the match, but I give you fair warning I'll outwit you if I can. It's foolish and it's wrong, but I'm going to do it, Doby."

"You talk like a fool, Gresham," said Doby, smiling gently. "But I reckon I'd shoot you if you had sense enough to back out of it. And Lucile and I ain't going

to forbid it, either. It wouldn't do any good. If Catharine's made up her mind to have you, that settles it."

"Do you mean, Doby," I gasped, "you are giving your consent?"

"I've got to," said Doby mournfully. "I'm mighty sorry it happened, Gresham, but it can't be helped now."

"I didn't know you were back, Father." Doby and I both started. Catharine was standing in the doorway.

"Come in, Catharine," said Doby cheerfully. "Sit down here on the arm of my chair." Doby put his arm around Catharine's waist.

"You're so serious here," said Catharine innocently.

"We ought to be. I haven't made up my mind whether I'm going to shoot Gresham or not. You two hypocrites—God bless you!"

CHAPTER XXX

THE CLOUD BURSTS

DIVIDE a responsibility: it is to cut a living child in twain. It may still survive in your words, but it is dead to your action. So long as Catharine and I had kept our secret, full responsibility rested upon me. I had no right to marry her since I could not provide her with adequate means of support. And I had never really wavered in my determination to protect Catharine against the consequences of her innocence of financial calculations. I had allowed myself to become engaged to her, to be sure; but there was nothing irrevocable in that.

When Catharine proposed her plan for an early marriage, I was greatly shaken. My delight was infinite, but I knew it was fallacious, as I should later have the pain of postponing the marriage, in order that the project might have time to dissolve of itself. I had known difficult duties before, but none even remotely comparable with this in harshness. Yet I had not had the least intention of shirking it.

Doby's generous, if regretful, consent to our marriage should have strengthened my determination to protect the best interests of Catharine even at the ex-

pense of my own happiness. Responsibility, however, is not a matter of logic, but one of feeling. Doby knew of the affair. Doby's interest in Catharine's welfare was as deep as any one's. Doby was in a position to veto the match. He had failed to do so. He considered it inevitable. So be it, said my feelings, sweeping aside all rational considerations. I still knew that I had no right to marry Catharine; but I also knew that nothing but some force external to me could keep me from doing it.

If Catharine and I were to be married at Christmas, I had to raise more money than the loan I was negotiating would yield. My only certain means of doing this was to sell my farm in Missouri. This would be to repudiate the moral obligation of keeping a roof over Stackleberry's head. It was an obligation that I had not voluntarily entered upon: it had fastened itself upon me solely by virtue of the social relation of landlord and tenant. But no one who has pursued philosophic studies with sincerity can have failed to formulate the principle that all ethical obligations of binding validity are imposed upon the individual without his consent. I had established Stackleberry on my farm without ever having formed any personal relations with him. A former tenant had thrown up his lease; Stackleberry had written me an almost illegible note offering terms satisfactory on their face, and I had accepted.

From a purely legal viewpoint, he had robbed me of my rent; he had let my buildings go to wrack; he had planned to put me out of the way, in order to escape the spiritual crisis of an explanation. Yet twelve hours of personal association had engrafted him and his woes upon my conscience. I could not possibly justify to myself the project of selling him out. That was, however, what I now made up my mind to do. The only concession I would make to my conscience was that I would wait a few weeks before opening negotiations for the sale.

With my farm transformed into cash, I should be able to carry my transient joys over a good part of the two Spains. In four months my money would be gone, and even my ill-paid position at Asuncion would be forfeited. It was impossible for me to conceive any way of meeting the obligations that would then rest upon me. I dismissed them from my mind. My only desire, just now, was to cut short the time in which scruples might vex me. I persuaded Catharine that it would be an entrancing thing to witness the Christmas festivities at Rio de Janeiro. That drew the date of our marriage three weeks earlier. I was searching the library for material to show that a Christmas in Buenos Aires would be still more delightful.

Every morning, in the intervals of my lectures, I read books on Spanish America and Spain. The library

of Asuncion University is weak, and its collection on the Latin territories is meagre. But how fascinating is every scrap of it! Spotless Curaçao, with its low, palm-studded landscapes and its still, greenish-blue lagoons. La Guayra, steaming under the shelter of its mountains, looking out upon the broad Caribbean, from which the dancing light is pepper in your eyes and revolution in your soul; Trinidad, with its rocking wharves laden down with sugar and pitch; Cayenne, red with crime and life; Para, and the broad Amazon murmuring of its brooding forests; Rio, bright city of the sun. And Old Spain, it makes one's mind reel to think of you! Of all forms of literature, there is none to compare with geography. Were it not for our unfortunate inoculation with it in the primary schools, the atlas would expel the novel from the shelves of the people, and the only commercially successful magazine would be a gazetteer.

“The wonderful thing about you,” said Catharine one day, “is the way you catch enthusiasms. When I took Jörgen Bjerg under my wing, you objected vigorously: soon you couldn't sleep till you had him rescued. When I started you building, you were cynically indifferent: soon you were crazier about it than I. You didn't have the least interest in Spanish cities when I first planned our trip: now you are ten times as keen for them as I am. You nearly ran away when I pro-

posed that we should be married at Christmas: now I believe you'd like to have the ceremony performed today."

"Yes, for God's sake, let it be today!"

"No, no. Do you suppose I'd run away before Mamma comes back? I think you've lost your wits."

"No, I've found them. If it were today, it would certainly be."

"It will, anyway. What could possibly prevent it?"

"Your mother. She hasn't consented yet."

"She will, though."

"I don't know," I said, dropping into despair. Lucile was the one cloud on my horizon,—Lucile and that letter, down in Doby's desk. It hadn't meant anything, I knew very well. But it is the habit of things originally meaningless to absorb great draughts of meaning, with time.

October 7 arrived, and with it Lucile, pink and white and smiling. There was an informal reception at Doby's house to welcome her. Doby had repudiated his office duties and was circulating among the guests, beaming with contentment and good nature. Mr. Allen, who had just returned from six months in the North, had put off his natural crustiness: even to me he was almost cordial. Everybody in town of any weight was there, and I, not being anybody of weight, soon began to feel my imponderability resting heavily upon me. As early as propriety permitted, I made my way

through the chattering groups of guests to take my leave of Lucile.

“Listen,” said Lucile, drawing me aside. “You are to come over again this evening. Nobody will be admitted to the house but the family. Do you hear?”

“I am to get in, nevertheless?” I queried gratefully.

“Oh, we consider you one of the family.”

The cloud didn't appear to be very ominous, after all. And, in the evening, Lucile was more pink and white and smiling than ever. It was good to hear again her sparkling narratives. Doby and Catharine and I sat in a semi-circle, listening contentedly.

“Oh, Colorado, the most wonderful country! It makes you young again to breathe its air. It makes you sentimental. You feel in love with everybody. I mostly spent my evenings alone, on the balcony, with the snowy mountains looming up before me in the moonlight. I don't know whether it was the air, or whether it was Colonel Warren's Madeira, but I felt just like a gushing girl of sixteen. The letters I wrote on that balcony—why, they made all my friends think I had gone daft. I wrote one to you, Mr. Gresham.”

There was a faint chuckle from Doby.

“And you never answered it,” said Lucile reproachfully.

Idiot that I was! It had never occurred to me that I ought to reply to that letter.

“No, Lucile,” I replied lamely. “It was a very poetic letter, and I’m a very prosy writer. I’ve a whole waste-basketful of rejected drafts of a letter to you.”

“It was a masterpiece of a letter,” said Lucile complacently. “It would have given Doby a pretty turn if he had seen it.”

Doby made a valiant effort to look severe, but succumbed to a burst of laughter.

“Why are you laughing, Doby?” demanded Lucile, eying him somewhat suspiciously, my troubled conscience said.

“The idea of my being jealous, Lucile,” said Doby, recovering himself; “it strikes me as very funny.”

“I don’t see why it’s funny,” said Lucile. “I don’t look so old that I couldn’t make you jealous.”

“Of course, Lucile, that wasn’t what I meant,” said Doby apologetically. “You’re the most beautiful woman in the world, and you could make anybody jealous, if you wanted to. What I was laughing at was the way I’d act if I got jealous.” And Doby assumed a savage mien that made us all laugh.

The storm had blown over, after all. It was with the greatest joy that I accepted an invitation to dine next day and eat of Catharine’s birthday cake. Catharine had managed to convey to me the information

that with the dessert an important announcement would be made to Lucile.

It was vain, I found next morning, to attempt to collect my thoughts sufficiently to lecture. I cut my classes unscrupulously, and lay all morning in my hammock, under my live-oak tree. From time to time a vile buzzard would swoop down from the blue and perch on a branch above me. I would shy a pebble at him, and he would retreat in panic toward the sky, but another would soon appear to molest me.

“Good mohnin’, sah,” said a deferential voice. I sat up. It was Uncle Daniel, who had cherished a grudge against me ever since I stopped giving him odd jobs. He had fallen into the habit of dropping in upon me from time to time to treat me to a bit of deferential insolence.

“Good morning, Uncle Daniel,” I said. “Can you tell me why these detestable buzzards keep alighting on my tree?”

Uncle Daniel sat down on the ground. “’Scuse me, sah, mah ol’ laigs is kinder stiff. Dem buzzahds?” And Uncle Daniel laughed.

“Mah ol’ mastah, Mistah Cole,” he said reflectively, “had a big tree in front ob hees house. An’ de buzzahds use to come an’ sit on it. An’ he use to say, ‘Dem’s mah sins, comin’ home to roost.’”

“There have been fifty buzzards visiting me this

morning," I said. "Do I look as if I had as many sins as that?"

"No, sah, you don't. But you cain't tell. Now, dey was Deacon Scruggs, jus' skin an' bone, dat niggah was. Mos' religious niggah in the State ob Texas. Well, sah, we done foun' out, dat niggah had fo' wives, an' fo' hatchin's ob pickaninnies."

"Wretched old buzzard, get out," I cried, shying a pebble at Uncle Daniel. The old negro got to his feet slowly and hobbled away, chuckling contentedly. As for me, my spirits had taken on a sombre hue. It was ridiculous: a soundly trained philosopher, in the twentieth century, troubled in spirit by an omen.

Fanny Zephрина issued from the house, and came toward me. "Mist' Gresham, Miss Catharine am at de gate an' wishes to speak to you."

I sprang up and hurried around the house to the gate. There was Catharine, a little pale, and sitting quite motionless on her filly, for once quite motionless, too.

"Mr. Gresham," she said, looking calmly at me, "there will be no dinner at our house tonight. Mother and I are leaving this afternoon for a visit to New Orleans."

So Lucile had vetoed the match!

"After what has occurred between you and Mother,"

said Catharine, still calmly, "it would be impossible for us to carry out our plans."

"What has occurred between your mother and me, Catharine?" I demanded.

"I do not know, and I do not desire to know."

I gazed at Catharine, bewildered. I had calculated upon a stormy scene with Lucile. That she might fly into a terrific rage and forbid Catharine to have anything more to do with me lay within the range of probabilities. Such a storm, however, I could weather, with Catharine's aid. But this was something for which I was not prepared. For Catharine was not merely transmitting Lucile's anger; it was her own anger that was animating her. She was just a white and motionless embodiment of wrath. From the quivering white plume of her hat to the tiny slipper in her stirrup, there was no life but rage.

"Catharine," I said in a blind despair, "nothing whatever has occurred between your mother and me, and you know it. It is no doubt best for you to rid yourself of me. But it wasn't necessary for you to bring against me a monstrous charge for which you know there is no foundation."

Catharine struck the filly's flank with her whip and galloped away. I shut myself up in my study. It was of no use to reflect upon the matter. I tried to prohibit myself from thinking about it. But it was a

long time before anything else would rest in my mind. My game was played to its end, I said to myself. Catharine's rage would burn itself out, but among the embers of it there would be found nothing resembling my former hopes. Sooner or later Catharine would no doubt conclude of herself that there had been no just cause for her rage. She would realise that I could not possibly have been philandering with Lucile without her knowledge. When had Lucile and I been together except in Catharine's presence? But the mere conception of me in such a rôle had naturally given her such a shock that it had for the time being expelled me, as a lover, from her consciousness.

Should I be able to rehabilitate myself? No, I should have to begin all over, and little by little build up in her mind the feeling that I was still of her generation, not of her mother's. This could probably be done, if I could throw myself upon the task with my whole heart. But as the project of marriage had never been anything but disastrous folly, it would be utterly impossible for me to proceed deliberately with its reconstruction. I was done for, and that, after all, was best. This I was forced to admit; but the admission did not make the loss any easier to bear.

When darkness came on I was still sitting in my study endeavouring to reconstruct my existence. There was a gentle rap, and Doby entered. Poor Doby! He

looked as if it were his universe that had just had its bottom knocked out, instead of mine.

“It’s all my fault, Gresham,” he said. “But it’ll come out all right in the end.”

“It isn’t your fault, Doby, and it will never come out all right.”

“I don’t know how I could have been such a fool,” said Doby remorsefully, “but it slipped out of me, somehow, that I had seen that letter. I never saw Lucile so mad in my life.”

“At me?”

“Yes, at you. She thought you had shown it to me, just to be able to brag about it.”

“Of course.”

“I explained to her fully just how it was. But that didn’t seem to do any good.”

“No. It naturally wouldn’t.”

“Then she ordered Catharine never to speak to you again. She said Catharine wouldn’t if she knew how you had behaved to her. Then Catharine went straight up.”

“Of course.”

“I suspect she thought you’d been trying to flirt with Lucile. I tried to explain the whole matter to her, but she wouldn’t listen.”

“Of course not.”

“You keep saying ‘of course,’” said Doby, vexed.

“Do you mean to imply that those women are acting naturally?”

“Yes.”

“Then you mean to imply that I ought to have foreseen all the row I brought on?”

“No.”

“Well, then, what the devil are you implying?”

“Nothing, Doby. I’ve been going over all this since morning. Anything looks natural to me now.”

“Don’t be so down-hearted, old man,” said Doby, sympathetically. “You ain’t dead yet, and I ain’t, and I’m going to make those women see the truth.”

“The truth is, Doby, my ship was bound to sink. She’s gone down on an uncharted reef, that’s all.”

“You’re worn out, my boy. And so am I. We’ll know better what to do tomorrow.” Doby pressed my hand, and left me. Dear Doby! He should have been thanking his stars that his daughter had been rescued from a disastrous match.

CHAPTER XXXI

ACADEMIC LIBERTY

WHEN I first entered upon my duties at Asuncion, my lectures were models of cautious circumlocution. I am conservative by nature, and my training had been conservative. And so, if I found myself forced to criticise a preposterous doctrine—something I avoided if possible—I was likely to say: “There are a number of very distinguished authorities who support this contention. But I would respectfully call their attention to the following consideration——” Such lecturing may be effective in deliberate New England. In Texas, where the blood is hot, philosophy cannot remain so cold. My classes were long-suffering, but they were visibly perishing under my words. And so, little by little, I had begun to vivify my style by the use of vituperation. “Imbecile” became my most common characterisation of a philosopher whose views differed from my own.

This enlivening of my lectures proceeded with unexampled rapidity after the extinction of my hopes. I lectured on philosophy with a ferocity worthy of a better cause. My lectures began to attract a considerable number of persons whose names were not

on my rolls—students who happened to have an hour to waste, townspeople who had no satisfactory means of entertainment. Among the former were my old friends the Pests, Chig, Pug, Barker and McGillicuddy, whom I had given passing marks at the close of the previous term, in the vain hope that they would trouble me no more. Among the townspeople I noticed especially a grey-haired, grim-visaged person in a sadly worn frock coat, of the style you see in photographs of the Civil War period. He attended as faithfully as a regular student, and took notes in shorthand on a big yellow pad. He always occupied a front seat, and apparently was very deeply interested.

One day as I folded my notes in token of the conclusion of the lecture he shot up a lean, brown hand. "Have you a question, sir?" I inquired.

"Yes, Professah," he replied in a high, scratchy voice. "It don't come in exactly heah, but I want to know, do you believe in the doctrine of evolution?"

"Which doctrine of evolution?" I inquired.

My interlocutor gazed at me in pained surprise at my evasion of his question. "Why, that we ah all descended from monkeys, suh."

"Only imbeciles believe that," I said contemptuously. Plainly he was disappointed.

“You believe, suh, that the flood covered Texas at the same time it drowned out the Old Wohld?”

“That doctrine, sir, has long since been abandoned, even by the least intelligent.”

A look of satisfaction passed over his face. Down went my reply on his yellow pad. As there were no further questions, I dismissed the class.

The next day the inquirer was in his accustomed place, but took no notes. At the close of the lecture he rose.

“Professah,” he said ceremoniously, “Ah have a question to put to you. Ah would be obliged if you would ask the ladies to retiah.”

“Sir,” I said with some asperity, “there are no questions in philosophy that cannot be discussed freely in the presence of ladies, and I shall entertain no other questions.”

The questioner turned to the gallery: “With the Professah’s permission, Ah will ask the ladies to retiah mahself.”

The ladies rose obediently, and filed down the steps and out of the door.

“Now, suh,” he said, turning to me, “Ah want to ask you, Professah, would you advise a Southehn young lady, the daughtah of a Southehn gentleman, to puh-sue huh studies in Hahvahd? After she has graduated heah, foh example?”

“I have never been called upon to give advice in

such matters," I said. It was as well to be cautious, since I had not the least idea as to his drift.

"If you wuh called upon foh advice, would you dissuade huh?"

"That would depend on the circumstances," I said. "If I thought she was competent to do graduate work, I certainly should not."

My reply was entered on the yellow pad. I was becoming mystified.

"Am Ah correctly infohmed, suh, that nigroes ah admitted to the graduate classes in Hahvahd?"

"You are." I began to see the drift now.

"And suppose a Southehn gentleman's daughtah went to Hahvahd, she might be fohced to sit in the same room with a nigro?"

"She could avoid it by changing her course."

"But if theh wuh some coahse she pahcticulahly had to have, she might be fohced to sit in the same class with a nigro?"

"I suppose she might."

"Now, suh," said the questioner triumphantly, "would you advise the daughtah of a Southehn gentleman to go to an institution wher a big, fat, greasy niggah might come into the same class with huh, and sit down beside huh, and lean ovah and *breathe* on huh, suh?"

Pug was on his feet. "Kin we put him out, suh?"

“No,” I said, trying hard to conceal my desire to laugh. “We may as well settle this matter now. In Harvard negroes are admitted to graduate classes, if they are qualified to do the work. And Southern young ladies are admitted on the same terms. But I have never heard of a negro in a Harvard class behaving disrespectfully toward a lady, Southern or Northern.”

“But if he did, suh,” persisted the questioner, “would the faculty and students take him out and buhn him in the Hahvahd Yahd?”

“No,” I replied, unable longer to repress my laughter.

My questioner jotted down a page of notes. “And yet, suh,” he said finally, “you would advise the daughtah of a Southehn gentleman to attend coahses at Hahvahd?”

“I might,” I said, “if she were properly qualified for the work.”

That seemed to be sufficient to satisfy my questioner’s curiosity. So I dismissed my class, and repaired to the University Hotel, where Doby and I were in the habit of taking luncheon together. We were a cheerless pair of comrades, but I preferred this arrangement to returning to my house, to spend a dreary afternoon alone. That house of mine—why under the sun had I encumbered myself with it?

I intended, as soon as I should get it cleared of debt, to place it on the market. The sale of the house would help me eradicate the memory of the past months. And yet, the idea of another person inhabiting my House of Vain Hopes was very distasteful to me. That, however, was bound to come, as I had no intention of remaining in Asuncion after the close of the college year. I had made up my mind to return to New York. The noise and jostling of the city would help me to shake off my Texas defeat.

Doby was very glum that afternoon. He had come to accept Catharine's decision as final. What his letters from Lucile and Catharine contained I do not know. Nothing encouraging to me, I could infer from his manner. It was a relief to me that the press of business forced him to hurry back to his office. This left me, however, a long afternoon to dispose of. There was nothing to do at the hotel. I decided at length to go over to Pergolino's Garden.

The court was deserted. I crossed it to the pavilion, and seated myself at the railing, where I could overlook the river. It was just a thin trickle of water now, which slipped noiselessly over the rock where the cataract roared in high water. The San Juan Obispo: What a little, lifeless stream to carry so romantic a name!

“It is a long, long time since you have been here,”

said a soft voice at my shoulder. It was Pergolino's daughter, in her changeless dress of red.

"It is years and years," I agreed.

"You look as if it were," she said, surveying me calmly.

"But you don't, Elena. You look just as you did the very first time I was here. You never change one bit."

"I change, too. But only in my soul."

No, not the least bit of change. Even the waves in her shining black hair were exactly the same. The black pupils, lost in the darkness of her eyes, still inventoried me. Was it the same look of disapproval? It was the same look, whether approval or disapproval, nobody could say.

"Do you know that I can tell fortunes?" asked Elena. "Give me your hand." How little and soft her hand; whatever she did with her time, she could never have toiled.

"You will love a very beautiful lady," she said, tracing a line with a tiny, tapering finger. "She will be fair, with blue eyes and golden hair. You will be very happy and then very unhappy, for you will lose her. You will go on a long, long journey."

"You are not much of a prophet, Elena," I said wearily. "All those things I know already. I have loved a fair lady, with blue eyes and golden hair. I

have been very happy and am very unhappy now. I have lost her. And I'm going to New York as soon as I possibly can. Tell me something new. Tell me about a very beautiful lady, dark, with black hair, and the blackest eyes, who has been very unkind to me."

"You are going away to New York?" asked Elena, seating herself in a chair I had turned to face mine.

"As soon as I can get away."

"I have never seen New York," said Elena reflectively. "Tell me of New York."

"New York is very big, and very wonderful. But chiefly it is a city of caves. There is a cave for every one who has been whipped and wishes time for his stripes to heal."

"And where you can hide? Hide from eyes, big and round and black? So big?" And Elena made the maximum circle possible with her thumb and forefinger.

"Your father's eyes aren't so big as that, Elena."

"No, but other eyes are."

"I see. Yes, I think you could hide, even from them."

"I will tell my own fortune," said Elena, tracing the indistinct lines in her soft palm. "I am going on a long journey, too. But, whether to New York or to Palermo, I cannot say. Not yet."

I looked up. Across the table stood Pergolino, his

bluish-black brows contracted. My eyes met his: those black eyes were not mortal weapons, anyway, I thought. But my eyes grew weary. His eyes directed themselves at Elena's; she returned his gaze, I thought, defiantly. But after a minute or two she rose and retired to the house. Pergolino turned his eyes on me again.

"Those are magnificent eyes you have, Mr. Pergolino," I said impatiently.

Pergolino made no reply. I drew a newspaper from my pocket and tried to read. Science proves that there is nothing in a pair of eyes, however deep and black, that can come out of them and make you twitch and smart, even when you avoid looking at them. None the less, I soon found it more pleasant to retire from Pergolino's Garden. There was no good reason why I should have gone there, anyway.

It was a fairly cool afternoon, and I decided to wear out my ill-humour by exploring the streets of Asuncion. It is remarkable how little of a town you see before you have lost your enthusiasm for it, and how little it is worth seeing after your enthusiasm has cooled. There are more mean, crooked little streets in Asuncion, and more tumble-down, disease-breeding hovels than any one whose daily business confines him to Main Street or the college quarter can imagine. I explored until I was thoroughly weary, and then boarded the trolley-car for home.

It was dark when I entered my house. "Mistah Ahbuthnot am in de study," said Fanny Zephrina. That surprised me. Doby did not usually call till much later.

"The deuce is to pay, Gresham," said Doby as I entered the study.

"I thought I had already paid him," I said. "What's up now?"

Doby slowly unfolded a paper and handed it to me. "Did you ever see this sheet?"

I glanced at it. "The Asuncion Lobo." "Yes," I said. "Picturesque journalism."

"Look at those scare heads."

I read, "A HELLION IN THE TEMPLE."

"Hellion?" I queried. "What's that?"

"That's you," said Doby.

I scanned the article with eagerness. The first paragraph was devoted chiefly to the sacred institutions of the Southland, apparently in mortal danger from a viper in their bosom. The second paragraph proved that Asuncion was the glorious beacon toward which all loyal Southern hearts were turned. The third paragraph opened fire on the Hellion—myself.

"Doby," I said, when I thought I had extracted the essence of the article, "I can't understand all this stuff. That I would be on the chain gang but for the benign charity and tolerance of the fair State of Texas, I

understand. That refers to my exploit in exporting Jørgen. That I am a Bob Ingersoll enwrapped in a Jesuit cloak, I also understand. That refers, no doubt, to my refusal to believe there ever was a flood in this thirsty country. But that I am a high priest of miscegenation, I can't possibly understand. What's his foundation?"

"Did you read the fine print?"

"No." I read it, and a light dawned upon me. There was a report of my defence of Harvard as a proper place for the daughters of Southern gentlemen to study. Every word of it, together with an account of my demoniacal laughter. "High priest of miscegenation," it was pointed out, was the logical inference.

"What about this 'purging fire of sacred cedar,' and the 'mephitic cries borne aloft to the skies on the wings of the fragrant smoke'?"

"That means somebody ought to burn you as a heretic."

"It's a literary gem. How much do you ask for it?"

"It ain't a laughing matter," said Doby gravely.

"Who under the sun will take it seriously?" I demanded.

"You don't understand," said Doby. "That scrawny scoundrel who visited your class to spy on

you is Sanborn, the editor. Somebody ought to kill him. I may do it, myself."

"Not on my account, however. What do I care what he says?"

"Gresham," said Doby with some embarrassment, "Sanborn is the editor, but Mr. Allen owns the paper."

"The deuce you say!" I ejaculated.

"I hate to think it," said Doby, still more embarrassed, "but Lucile may have had something to do with this. That's why I don't dare to kill that scoundrel Sanborn. I don't know, and you don't know, what he may happen to have in his desk."

"Nonsense, Doby. Mr. Allen has been after me ever since I came. Lucile has defended me valiantly for a year: now she's away and he's taken this opportunity to get me."

"It may be that way," said Doby dejectedly. "I hope it is. But, whatever started it, I'm afraid he's got you, old man. That confounded college is too mercenary to back you up one minute."

"It's too poor, Doby. But now, just between you and me, I don't care one bit. I'm dying to get away. I didn't suppose I could resign at this time of year, or I'd have done it. They can't dismiss me too soon to suit me."

Doby was silent.

“You know, Doby, I love you. But you are absolutely all I have in this town, and I can’t live on you. Besides, associating with me isn’t doing you any good.”

“Yes, it is, Gresham,” said Doby mournfully, rising to go. “I stand by my friends. But I can see why you want to get away. Good night, old man.”

The next morning I hurried to the college and went immediately to President Brett’s office.

“Good morning, Gresham,” he said cordially. “Have a Mexican. Well, the deuce has broken loose.”

“That is to say, our generous patron.”

“Yes.”

“And what are we going to do about it, Mr. President?”

“I propose that we walk out in a body,” said the President. “You and I. The rest can’t afford it.”

“That won’t do, Mr. President. The college can get on without me, but not without you. You are the only man I have ever seen who could hold this presidency and retain his personal dignity.”

“Yes, that was what I felt myself,” said the President, smiling. “I’m beginning now to think it’s beyond even me.”

“It’s for you to decide when you are to make a break for liberty. This isn’t a good cause to fight in, though. For I’m most eager to get away.”

“Is that so?” said the President, evidently relieved.
“I’m glad to hear it.”

“Now as to the matter at hand. When do my duties cease?”

“Immediately.”

“And when does my salary cease?”

“The trustees have generously voted that it shall continue until the end of the semester. And, in case you should wish to leave Asuncion very soon, they authorise me to pay you the whole sum at once.”

“Hurrah! Let’s have it.”

“Say, Gresham,” said the President, as he wrote his big signature on a little check, “what about another boat ride on the San Juan Obispo?”

“Thank you, Mr. President, but I must return home to pack my trunk. I’d compromise you, anyway. Good-bye!” I held up the check. “The joke’s at the expense of our generous patron.”

“Good-bye, Gresham, God bless you. Hang it all, I hate to see you go!”

CHAPTER XXXII

THE VALLEY OF THE LOST RIVER

THE sun had gone down, and the first breath of the Gulf breeze was stirring the mossy drapery of my live-oak. A few minutes more and it would sweep the dry heat of the day far inland. I lay in my hammock, reflecting. My Asuncion existence was practically wound up. I should never need to go down to the college again. With the proceeds of President Brett's check I had extinguished all my petty debts on Main Street, and they had extinguished the check. The only soul left in Asuncion that remained loyal to me was Doby; and as soon as Lucile and Catharine should return, his relations with me would become very embarrassing to him. Anyway, I could not well endure the idea of remaining in Asuncion after their return.

If I could only go at once! But I had hardly enough money left to buy a ticket to San Antonio. And, then, I still had my house on my hands.

My beautiful house, that had eaten up most of my patrimony, and was still plastered with the unpaid debt to Ellsworth. Whatever possessed me, anyway, to fetter myself with a house? If I could have filed it off

me, as Jörgeu did his irons, I should gladly have sat up all night at the task. My beautiful house, symbol of hopes and cravings too foolish ever to have been entertained at all. At that moment, if it had been going up in flame and smoke, the sight would have cheered me. It would never catch fire now. Unless old Allen, in his unreasoning malice, should hire somebody to burn me out.

I knew, however, that he would never do that. He was a law-abiding old scamp. No doubt he had many and many a time robbed the widow and turned the orphan out to perish. No doubt he had broken men and sent them to the Devil, who does certainly prowl around persistently in Texas. But he kept well under the shelter of the law, as the Devil usually does. There's plenty of room there for both.

I might put my house on the market. But much good that would do: everybody in town was in debt to Allen, or in debt to some of his debtors. Not a soul would bid for my house without Allen's consent. I might try to let it; but nobody would take it without consulting Allen. Nobody but some member of an out-cast tribe; the brutal keeper of a disreputable bar, a prolific Mexican or a rising negro. I pictured to myself the burly black figure of my presumptive tenant; the society airs of the females of his household, receiving guests under my disgraced arches; black jol-

lity in my living-room—" Oh deah, Mistah Washin'ton, you'll kiel me wid laffin." No, I'd close up the house. And the rain would eat in at the eaves, and crooked, gray trickles would stain the azure of my panels and disfigure Catharine's graceful Botticelli nymphs. The bats would get in, and a ghost or two, a negress witch would burrow her way into the cellar, other black déclassés would follow; my study would become a voodoo shrine; thefts and robberies would be planned from the house and the loot stored in caches in the cellar, among scorpions and moccasin snakes. And in the end the outraged white neighbours would clear the nuisance away with fire. Oh, House of Vain Hopes!

I was roused from my nightmare of reflection by the sound of a noisy troop approaching along the road. My gate squeaked on its hinges. Enemies, certainly, I said to myself. For I had only one friend, Doby, and the sound was big enough for a dozen men. I went around the house to satisfy my curiosity. My ancient persecutors, the four Pests—Chig and Barker, Pug and McGillicuddy—in marching order. Each had a roll over his back which appeared to be the section of a tent; each had a canteen at his side and a big Colt holster on his hip; Chig had a tent pole on his shoulders; Pug carried a small kettle, and Barker a basket, presumably of provisions.

As they caught sight of me they saluted ceremoniously.

“Well, suh,” said Chig cheerily, “we fellows got sick of those cheap boahdin’-houses downtown. We ah goin’ to try a little camp life. You don’t cahh if we put up ou’ tent on yo’ premises?”

“Certainly not,” I replied. “Throw down your traps and take a smoke. You’ll want to cool off.”

“Thank ye, suh, thank ye.”

I distributed cushions and cigars, and for a few moments we all puffed away in silence.

“If it ain’t impuhtinent, suh,” said Chig, “we’d like to ask you a question.”

“Go ahead.”

“They ah sayin’ round the college that they ah goin’ to kick you out. Is that so?”

“Yes,” I said. “They’ve already kicked me out.”

“On account of that mizzable yelpin’ Sanbohn?”

“Mostly on his account, I believe.”

“Well, if we’d ’a’ known what he was up to, you can just bet we fellows would have done some kickin’, too. I mighty neah done it, anyhow. ‘That’s a mean cuss,’ I said, when I fust laid eyes on him.”

“I’ve answered your question. Now, if it isn’t impertinent, I want to ask one: Why did you come out here to camp?”

"Well, suh," said Chig judiciously, "maybe you don't know this yeah town ve'y well. It's got a mighty hahd lot in it, down theh on the flats. And the newspaper said, 'Buhn him out,' or somethin' like that. Now, those fellows down on the flats don't cah any mo' about atheism and ou' sacred social system than you or I. But they'd like to see a little fun. Theh ain't been no buhnin's heah foh yeahs. They wouldn't buhn you out, maybe, but they might take it into theih haid to give a No'thehn fellow somethin' to memembeh 'em by. So we fellows said, we'll go out and look aftah the Professoh. You see, we'd like a little fun ou'selves."

"Boys, you're princes! I hadn't thought about those fellows from the flats; it's two miles to walk, and they're always tired. But I'm a thousand times obliged to you for coming. I was lonely; and here I have the best company in Texas."

"We're not much on philosophy," said Barker, grinning. "We can't talk much deep stuff. But we like you, Prof; and we're going to stand by ye."

"Barker, I'm deeply moved," I said. "But I don't see why under the sun you are mixing up with me. They may expel you from the college."

"To hell with the college!" said McGillicuddy. "We ain't never going back to that cheap joint again. The profs are old hens and the boys are sissys. And the girls, God bless 'em, what business has a bug like

Chig, foh instance, in such a bush of roses? I've often thought we ought to put paris green on him."

"Paris green on Chig?" piped Pug. "He eats it foh breakfast."

Chig appeared to have no ears for such light talk. "Professoh," he said as the chuckling subsided, "may I ask what you figure on doin'? Whelh you goin' to go?"

"I haven't decided yet."

"Us fellows—we fellows ah goin' to El Paso. It's the gateway to Mexico, you know."

"I see," I said. "You're going to be handy when things begin to happen."

"That's exactly it," said Chig. "Things have got to break loose down theh soonah or latah. And we ah goin' to be theh.—Maybe we won't wait, though. We'll go right in, anyhow."

"There must be lots of good things in Mexico, if they were to be had," I said reflectively.

"You ah dead right theh," said Chig. "Chihuahua is the finest country in the wohld. It's as much better'n Texas as Texas is better'n the rest of the United States."

"Really? But tell me, Chig, how much of the United States have you seen?"

"Nevah been no'th of Texas in my life, suh. Nevah wanted to be. But you know, yo'self, theh ain't no state like Texas. Ain't that so?"

“Well, Chig, it’s so, as long as you boys are in it. But you’re all going to Mexico, and then what will Texas amount to? Tell me that.”

“I tell you, Professoh, you come along with us. We’ll be in El Paso tomorrow night. Lots of Americans ah goin’ in theh. And they ah gettin’ things, too. Why, they don’t think any mo’ of takin’ a thing away from a Mexican than you or I would think of takin’ it away from a niggah.”

“What use would I be in Mexico?” I objected. “I can’t shoot and I can’t ride. I can’t even cook.”

“That don’t make any diff’ence,” said Chig reassuringly. “We fellows can do all the shootin’ that’s requiahed. And we won’t do much ridin’, at least not hahd ridin’. I tell you what”—and Chig dropped his voice—“we’ve got something all figured out already. Not mo’ than two hundred and fifty miles from Porfirio Diaz is a little valley we’ve set ou’ hahts on. It’s called El Valle del Rio Perduto, the Valley of the Lost Rivah. Theh’s a rivah as big as the San Juan Obispo comes down from the mountains. Used to run to the Atlantic, the Mexicans say: now it runs into a little lake, cool and sweet, which nevah rises or falls. Rivah must go undehground. That’s the valley we ah aftah. Can’t get into it except along the no’th shoah of the lake. We’ll build a log blockhouse theh, and settle down and play cahds and eat goat meat till the row is ovah

and Mexico is paht of the United States, same as Texas. Theh we'll be, and the valley is ouhs—just as good title as any in Mexico. Twenty-five or thihty squaih miles, all ready to irrigate, and plenty of watah. You can grow anything—cawn, cotton, coffee, awnges, anything you can think of. And the best Havana tobacco grows wild round the lake.”

“Do you mean to tell me such a valley is lying uninhabited, just to be squatted on?” I demanded, incredulous.

“Yes, suh, practically that. Theh's maybe two or three hundred Mexicans in the valley, but we'll get rid of them—give 'em five days to vacate. Same as old King did heah in Texas. His heirs have a good title, hain't they? We'll just sit theh and watch the row out. And, even if Mexico ain't annexed this time, it'll come latah. We can wait. The Mexicans won't daih to touch us, once we ah settled.”

“That's very well for you,” I replied. “I still can't see what I'd be good for.”

“You could teach us philosophy,” said Barker. “Plenty of time. Ain't that big enough a contract? Say, ain't it?”

“We ain't jokin', Professoh,” said Chig with a reproving glance at Barker. “We'd like mighty well to have you with us. Prob'bly you think us a bunch of rough-necks, as Barker puts it. We ah. We ain't what

you call ornaments in a college. But out on the plains we ah different."

"Out on the plains you're men, Chig. The best of the breed. I'd love to be one of you. But I'm a philosopher, alas! and therefore I never can do what I'd love to do. It's getting dark and I hear the mosquitoes. Come in; you can put up your tent in the living-room."

"Oh, we cain't camp on you, Professoh," said Chig deprecatingly. "We can sleep just as well right heah on the ground. Just hahden us up a little."

"You don't know my mosquitoes," I said. "I expect to take all the prizes on mosquitoes at the Houston fair."

"Bettah shut Chig up, then," cried Pug. "They might bite him, and it'd pizen 'em."

"Anyway, I'm not going to stay to be bitten," I said. "I'd be lonely in the house, all by myself. Do come in. I've some crackers and cheese, and you all have canteens, I see."

"Water, just water," asserted McGillicuddy. "Brazos River water. Best in the world."

My guests yielded, and followed me into the house. Verily, they were rough-necks, under the light, and men. They settled themselves on my upholstered chairs, protesting vehemently that plush was not meant for them. Under a roof Chig's fluency of speech disappeared. After several fruitless attempts to set the

conversation going, I produced the crackers and cheese. McGillicuddy took a swallow of Brazos River water from his canteen; Pug and Barker did likewise.

"'Tain't watah, Professoh," said Chig. "I don't know as you caih, but it's what we fellows call pain-killer. Maybe you might taste it?"

"Thank you, Chig, no. Kill all the pains you have, boys, for me. I can't afford to kill my pains; they're all a philosopher has to live for."

"Just as you say, suh," said Chig politely. "It's what Barker calls rough-neck stuff, and maybe you couldn't stand it. Pahdon me." And he took a long pull at his canteen.

My guests' initial embarrassment was broken. Pug got my old mandolin from the mantel-shelf and picked out a tune—Mexican, he said it was, but I suspected that he was improvising it. Barker sang plaintively: "My Name It Is Joe Bowers." Then Pug and McGillicuddy executed a most solemn dance. Chig produced a deck of cards and performed some miracles with them. The canteens grew lighter, still lighter the spirits; soon my house burst forth in a roar of song. The song was of epic length:

"There was a little ship from a No'thehn countree,
Crying, Oh! the Lowlands, lonesome, low;
There was a little ship from a No'thehn countree,

And she went by the name of the Golden Willow
Tree,
As she sailed from the Lowlands, lonesome, low,
As she sailed from the Lowlands, low."

As for me, I didn't sing, but I rejoiced in the uproar. Some passer-by would surely hear it, and report to old Allen how my house was bearing its misfortunes.

The hour was growing very late, indeed, and neither the canteens nor my guests appeared near exhaustion. I was; but my part was that of host. In the end a happy idea struck Pug; he would deliver one of my lectures from memory. Judged by its effects, the imitation was good. McGillicuddy soon dropped his head on his shoulder; Barker pulled up a chair for his feet and dozed away; Chig begged my "pahdon" and stretched himself out on a sofa. Eventually the lecturer was overcome himself: he got down on his hands and knees, and curled up on a rug. I put out the lights and left them to sleep away their joys. Dear Pests! The world might profit from more of their kind.

CHAPTER XXXIII

PETTICOAT PROTECTION

THE penalties of a carouse may fall heavily upon those who participate in its pleasures; they fall still more heavily, however, upon the abstemious person who sits by as a mere spectator. I awoke with a leaden head, at the first screaming of the jays at dawn. An hour later, when I tiptoed into the living-room, I found my guests and protectors sleeping peacefully. Barker's head had slipped off the back of his chair and hung heavily over an arm of it; delicious repose was on his face, upturned to my envious inspection. Pug was curled up like a dog, pillowing his stubbly cheek on his arm. McGillicuddy, with eyes veiled, looked yellow and old; this was natural, however, after twenty years of beating about the Southwest. Chig's face was pale and calm; a handsome death mask, needing a bit of retouching, here and there, but fundamentally fine, a type of the men who have so marvellously extended the boundaries of Anglo-Saxondom. I closed the shutters and slipped quietly out of the room.

The morning was cool and fresh, so I decided to try to lighten my head and heart by a walk down to the

river. There are many pleasant walks in the outskirts of Asuncion, but the one that had become my favourite in the last weeks ran through a weed-grown peach orchard, to the head of an arroyo that wound around among limestone hills to the river. In its higher reaches it was quite dry, and you descended a hundred feet or more upon a natural staircase of smooth stratified rock. Lower down you picked your way through prickly shrubs, until, near the level of the river, you entered a gallery of live-oaks overrun with grape-vines and draped with moss. Nearly a mile of the gallery, and the arroyo turned sharply around the base of Mount Crockett, a limestone mass possibly four hundred feet high, but an excellent miniature of a wild, precipitous mountain. When the day wasn't too hot, I always climbed Mount Crockett, pulling myself up by the aid of the sturdy cedars that had somehow succeeded in forcing their roots into the crevices in the stone. Marvellous cedars they were: not so high as your head, but twisted and many branched, for all the world like Doré pictures of the Cedars of Lebanon. Cut into them, and your knife struck at once the hard, red wood; of white sapwood there was scarcely a trace. There are none of the familiar rings in the wood; at least, you can't find them without a microscope. For the annual additions to the girth of one of those trees is thinner than the finest silk.

It was not, however, for the satisfaction of overtopping trees six hundred years old that I used to climb to the summit of Mount Crockett. Nor yet to see the silver curves of the river, now hugging a cliff under the deep shade of the water cypresses, now shining brightly between two narrow ribbons of corn and cotton. There was a sight of far stronger appeal to one who has been put to the test of survival, and has been found wanting. It was the railroad, which followed the curves of the river, just above high-water level. Every morning at half-past seven a passenger train came whistling and puffing around the foot of Mount Bowie, across the arroyo. The sooty smoke from the locomotive rose to colossal heights in the pure morning air. And how sweet the smell of it, among the cedars of Texas!

There was, of course, first of all, a baggage-car. Next a Jim Crow car—the oldest to be seen in the South; they say it carried troops in the Civil War. Then a day coach or two, and finally a Pullman coach. That Pullman coach had come from out of the world—at least, from out of St. Louis. It would stand on the side-track at Asuncion until six in the evening, and then it would set out again, gaily, for the world. O fascinating sight, the Pullman coach! The dream of being on it haunted me day and night. To be on the Pullman, going away, the houses of Asuncion flying

past, then fifteen hours of cotton fields, then the corn and pastures of Oklahoma and Kansas and Missouri—going away! As the mermaids sang to the sailors of old, becalmed far from home upon strange waters, so does the creaking Pullman coach sing to you when you are lost in Texas. Not much of a Pullman in itself; dusty, no doubt, full of flies and mosquitoes, its upholstery sadly needing renovation. On the New York Central you'd appeal to the Public Service Commission if the company offered you no better accommodations. But in the city of Asuncion—almost, if not quite, off the map—those little defects in the Pullman go for nought; you love it, even to its goodly name—Zenobia, Semiramis or Acheronta.

This day I needed the sight of the Pullman, as a charm against temptation. For the project of the invasion of the Valley of the Lost River did mightily appeal to me. To help to turn one of the very last pages in the record of Anglo-Saxon conquest; to repeat, in a small way, the experiences of Hengest and Horsa, of Raleigh and Clive and Boone and Houston—what a vision! To lose oneself as a belated feudal lord in the Valley of the Lost River, cultivating an estate with labourers working under the potent motive of gain, and the more potent motive of fear; to build a walled castle on a naked spur above the river, with lookout tower from which to observe the ebb and flow of revo-

lutions in the great valley below; to learn the joys and pains of a life constantly under arms—what sufficient counter-attractions had civilisation to offer? Still, I hesitated. Not on account of the two or three hundred Mexicans to be expelled from our valley. I was, of course, bred as an anti-imperialist; but so near the equator as Texas, it is hard to hold the anti-imperialistic position. Life runs fiercely in the warm climates; plunder, lest ye be plundered, is their law. In the cooler latitudes men may survive with feeble constitutions like mine, or with lofty ethics like those of Boston. In the hot belt, all round the world, the weak perish and might is right.

I hesitated, and for what will seem to the reader a far weaker reason: just a longing to return to New York. I had not been born in New York, nor educated there. I had lived there, after all, for only a short time. There was no single experience I had had in New York that I could recall with much pleasure. There was no person in New York who cared enough for me to exchange letters with me. Yet Swiss never longed more for his mountains than I for New York. I had just to close my eyes, and a relief map of Manhattan projected itself on the screen of my imagination. Here a street, there a park presented their familiar features. Here a monument, grim and grey; there a building towering above the fog. Here a club

where I had lounged a few hours, every stone in its façade distinct in my memory.

For those who live all their lives in New York, the city has innumerable charms, no doubt. There are many vistas that are beautiful, there are many works of might and dignity; there are abundant resources for the satisfaction of all the senses, and the soul, too, need lack few of the things appropriate to its sustenance. But it is not these charms that draw you, when you find yourself a castaway on a distant sea, clinging to the wreckage of your existence. No, you view New York in its one true aspect: that of a city of caves.

There are men of short historical lore who suppose that the natural home of man is the isolated house upon hill or plain, or in the lonely forest valley. Here, they imagine, he will find happiness. But the truth is that man lived in caves for hundreds of thousands of years: a few hundred years measure his history as a house-dweller. If you are strong of body, of robust faith and prosperous fortune, you may be able to endure the weight of great open spaces. If you have lost your health or faith or fortune, your heart turns to the cave from which your race issued. And that is why I yearned for New York.

Now I caught the sound of a distant whistle. Then, the rumble of the train crossing a bridge. For a few minutes further sounds were cut off by an intervening

hill. Then another whistle, loud and clear, and the locomotive rounded Mount Bowie, and the train dashed by. My eyes rested longingly upon it; most longingly upon the Pullman coach, with its big gold lettering, SIREN. O Pullman Siren, at sight of you,

“Mein Herz wuchs mir so sehnsuchtsvoll,
Wie bei der Liebsten Gruss.”

Ordinary prudence required me to remain in Asuncion until I could dispose of my house. None the less, if I had been able to lay hands on money enough for my passage to New York, I could not have resisted the temptation to depart at once. It was fortunate for me, I thought, that the Main Street merchants had so completely stripped me of cash.

I returned to my house. The Pests had departed, but their accoutrements were still scattered on the living-room floor. On the table was a note weighted down with a pistol:

“DEAR PROFESSOR:—We’ve gone to get some more ammunition. We’ll be back before sundown.

“Yours for Mexico,

“CHIG & Co.”

I really had nothing to do, so I arranged my cushions under the live-oak and stretched out for a nap.

It is one of the virtues of Texas that sleep comes to you there without much coaxing. If you're not occupied, rest your head where it won't bob around too much, and you're asleep. Only, beware the sun, which has supernatural powers for boring a hole through the heaviest shade and firing one of your cheeks or ears brick-red. A native Texan's head will wriggle itself away from the intruding ray, without interruption of dreams. A Northerner's head is not sufficiently adjusted to the environment to do this. You do not at first awaken, but your dreams assume a molten hue, and on waking you find yourself in a most gruesome humour.

The sun had a bead on my brows, and my soul was becoming suffused with the ghastly pessimism of sleep. A voice, I became conscious, was trying to force itself into my ears: "Mr. Gresham! Pahdon me. Mr. Gresham."

I sat up and rubbed my scorched forehead. Mr. Ellsworth was sitting near me, even more solemn of mien than he had been at the times when I'd catch him substituting inferior material for the first-class material I was paying him for.

"You look sick, Mr. Ellsworth," I said. "What has happened to you? Gone bankrupt?"

"Pretty neahly," said Mr. Ellsworth, seating himself on a cushion and taking from his pocket a chew

of Presbyterian tobacco. "They wuh goin' to put me out of business, and they fohced me to do something I suhtainly hated to do."

"What was that?" I inquired with concern. From his manner, it was easy to see that the matter was of peculiar interest to me.

"I had to sell yo' notes to Mistah Nathan."

"What, Ellsworth, you sold me out? You promised me never to do that."

"I know. And it most killed me to do it. But it was eithah sell you out or go out of business. Nathan fixed it up with the lumbah companies and the banks. I was all tied up in a knot. No lumbah, no credit, and three impohtant contracts on. I couldn't let mah wife and family stahve, Mistah Gresham. I suhtainly am sorry I had to do it."

"How much did you get for me, Mr. Ellsworth?" I inquired.

"I wish you wouldn't put it that way, Mistah Gresham. I got fifteen hundred dollahs foh yo' notes."

"Fifteen hundred for notes for twenty-seven hundred and fifty dollars. That's a big discount. I'd certainly have paid them in less than three months, you know."

"Yes. I reckon you would. But I'd have stahved, suh, in three months. All the profit I made on yo' house is wiped out. I didn't make two-bits for all my trouble."

“I’m sorry, Ellsworth. But I suppose old Nathan can better afford to wait for his money than you could.”

“Yes, suh, he can. But he won’t wait. You see, suh, the notes ah technically due now. He’ll make you pay up, or yo’ house will be sold ovah yo’ haid.”

“Sold!” I exclaimed.

“Yes, suh. Inside of a week. Don’t you think you might possibly raise a loan from yo’ friends in the Nohth? If you cain’t, Nathan will suahly get yo’ house.”

“How much do you think my house will bring at a sale?”

“Fifteen hundred dollahs, maybe.”

“Fifteen hundred! Why, man, it cost over thirteen thousand dollars! Maybe some of my improvements were ill-advised. But certainly somebody would bid four or five thousand for it.”

“Nobody will bid foh it but Nathan. You see, it’s pretty well undehstood in such affaihns, one man shouldn’t spoil anotheh’s business. And besides, Nathan is supposed to do business foh himself, but it’s old Allen that’s behind him.”

“That looks like conspiracy to me. Couldn’t you bid, say, three thousand dollars for it? That would give me two hundred and fifty dollars to get away on. You know I can’t walk North.”

“I’d be glad to do it, suh. I’d be glad to have the house at twice that price. But I cain’t affohd to antagonise Nathan and Allen, you know.”

“Well, for plundering the stranger, you Texans are great masters. I suppose I’ll still owe Nathan over one thousand dollars after he’s taken my house away from me?”

“Yes, suh. But I wouldn’t cah much about that. He would hahdly botheh to sue you.”

Evidently, my house problem was solved. Still, it was a bit bewildering, the simplicity of the robbery. Very nearly as simple as our projected eviction of the Mexicans in the Valley of the Lost River.

“I’ll tell you how you could save yo’ prop’ty, suh,” said Ellsworth at length. “If you could manage to get ma’ied, Nathan couldn’t touch it. Yo’ place would be sheltahed undah the provisions of the Homestead law.”

“I don’t understand. Nathan has a present right to take my property. If I get married, he can’t?”

“No, suh, he cain’t. Undah the beneficent institutions of the great State of Texas, a wife is considered a man’s prefuhed credituh. Huh right to a home is indefeasible whetheh she appeahs on the scene eahly or late.”

“That means, I can borrow money as a single man,

on the strength of my possession of property: then marry, and let my creditors whistle. Is that it?"

"You have it now, suh."

"Have you ever lost money on account of those beneficent institutions?"

"Yes, suh. I've whistled in my time."

"Then how did you have the recklessness to accept my notes?"

"I considahed you a man of honah, suh. And besides," Mr. Ellsworth smiled faintly, "I didn't considah you ve'y ma'iageable, suh."

"Thank you, Ellsworth. You never can tell, though."

"No, suh, you cain't. I could give you the name of a lady who would ma'y you befo' sundown."

"Do I know her?"

"No, suh."

"Then, aren't you a little rash in your assertion?"

"You see, suh, I thought you might like to suhprise old Nathan. So I called on huh, and told huh yo' situation, and suggested, suh, that she might rescue you, suh, from gross injustice. She was somewhat reluctant, suh—indeed, she was—but she consented at last, suh, and she will be ready any time you say—today, tomorrow or the next day. Heah's huh address, suh."

I gazed upon the card in stupefaction: "Mrs. Eleanor Hinckley Jones. 14 Cerro Gordo Avenue."

"Ellsworth," I said weakly, "for an honest man, you're a remarkably true friend."

"Thank you, suh," said Ellsworth dubiously.

"But I don't see how I could make my arrangements in so short a time. I lack experience, you see."

"The lady has made all the necessary arrangements, suh," said Ellsworth, eying me cautiously. "She has been ma'ied fo' times already."

"For Heaven's sake!" I exclaimed. "What became of the four husbands?"

"Entiahly dead, suh; entiahly dead. I've seen the last two in theih coffins, mahself. She has had remarkable bad luck with husbands, suh. And she's still a young woman."

Clearly, the logic of events was in hot pursuit of me. I'd have to decide something pretty quickly. Mrs. Eleanor Hinckley Jones—Gresham? Mexico or New York—either looked divinely attractive to me.

"Shall I say you will call, suh?" asked Ellsworth timidly.

"No.—Yes. Say I will call day after tomorrow."

"You might prefuh to see huh today," Ellsworth insisted gently.

"No, Ellsworth, I'm terribly busy today. I have to pack my trunks. No, maybe I won't have to do

that.—Do leave me, Ellsworth. I can't say now what I'll do."

"As you say, suh," said Ellsworth sadly. "I hope you haven't hahd feelings against me foh selling yo' notes?"

"Not at all, not at all. Good-bye, Ellsworth, and good luck."

Eleanor Hinckley Jones. If it had been Eleanor Jones Hinckley, it wouldn't have been so bad. Eleanor Hinckley Jones. Repeat that name to yourself, slowly, rhythmically. Then introduce into your imagination fo' husbands, quite authentically stark and stiff. Then, let this aggregation of the quick and the dead have all arrangements made for your admission to their confraternity. If ever I go mad, you will know me by my monotonous muttering, "Eleanor Hinckley Jones."

CHAPTER XXXIV

PO' WHITE TRASH

UPON Ellsworth's first intimation that my house was practically forfeited to old Allen's malice, I was relieved rather than depressed. For weeks that house had weighed upon me as a frightful encumbrance: something I could neither keep nor get rid of. Nevertheless, I had counted on finding a purchaser at a sacrifice not so heavy as to strip me wholly of funds. Indeed, I had been confident that skilful angling for buyers would reward me with a considerable sum of ready money. Mr. Ellsworth had no sooner departed than I began to realise how little my desire to be rid of the house really amounted to. I went through its rooms surveying the ideas of Catharine, incorporated in every part of them, and very quickly accumulated all I could contain of bitterness. Best to be parted from them, even through robbery!

The sun had set, but as yet there was no sign of my guests, the bold filibusters. I lay in my hammock awaiting their return. There was the sound of footsteps in the dry grass behind me. I turned. It was Doby, looking more dejected than usual.

"Oh, Doby," I cried, "you're the man I wanted to

see! There's a cushion. Now tell me, can Nathan take my house away from me?"

"What are the circumstances?" asked Doby.

"Ellsworth held my notes for twenty-seven hundred and fifty dollars. He's sold them to Nathan. And he says Nathan can take my house from over my head if I don't pay up immediately. Which is something I can't possibly do."

"Have you copies of the notes?" demanded Doby.

"No."

"Do you remember the precise terms of the contract?"

"No. Only that they were due October 1."

"A month overdue," said Doby in a grave tone. "Have you tried to borrow the money downtown?"

"No. What good would that do? Allen is behind Nathan."

"I reckon your house is gone." Doby's face was very dejected now. "And I'm to blame for that, too."

"Not at all, Doby. My structure of existence here was flimsy: it all just collapsed at a breath."

"I wonder what Lucile will say to this," speculated Doby.

"She won't say anything. When she returns, I'll be gone, and the whole episode will have been forgotten."

“She’s back now.”

“What! Lucile back?” I wanted to add, “And Catharine?” But I thought better of it. How did it concern me, anyway?

“She got back yesterday afternoon. I told her how she’d done you out of your position.”

I wanted to hear more, but Doby remained silent. No doubt, Lucile had expressed satisfaction over my defeat.

“Catharine’s back, too.”

I waited eagerly for more: too eagerly for one who had had the opportunities for acquiring wisdom bestowed upon me of late. Doby was evidently waiting for a question from me, but I could not formulate one.

“What’s going on here, Gresham?” asked Doby, in another tone. “We heard an infernal uproar over here last night. Have you taken to drink?”

“Oh, no! I’m harbouring some of my students here. We’re planning to invade Mexico.”

“Lucile couldn’t sleep for the row,” remarked Doby. “I told her you were probably having a devil of a good time. But she said I was a fool and didn’t understand anything.”

“What did that mean?” I demanded, perplexed.

“Blessed if I know, Gresham. I used to think I understood women. But I don’t. Nobody does.”

No rejoinder appeared necessary, so I waited for Doby to proceed. Apparently nothing worth saying presented itself to him. I was casting about for some indifferent topic of conversation, when a Mexican song burst upon our ears.

“My friends returning,” I said. “Should you like to join us for an hour or two?”

“No,” Doby replied gruffly. “Why couldn’t we take some of these cushions and sit a while under the arbour? I reckon you’ve got to be near to see that they don’t pull the house down.”

“It’s Nathan’s house,” I remarked. “But I’d rather sit with you than with them. Come on.”

We had barely time to settle ourselves comfortably under the vines before the Pests rounded the house at a gallop. They burst through the door and turned on the lights.

“Now it will break loose,” murmured Doby. But no sound issued from the house. The light from the transom over the door was the only sign of their presence. No doubt, they were well worn out by the labours of the day.

“What I wanted especially to talk to you about,” said Doby in a low voice, “was Catharine. I think she sees her mistake.”

“Doby, it was all a mistake, from the beginning.” I was trying to maintain an air of philosophic indif-

ference. "The end came in an absurd way. But it was good it came, you will agree."

"That may all be true. But Catharine ain't easy about it. And she never will be."

A desperate feeling of crumbling resolution came over me. "She'll see the matter in a different light after a few months," I argued. "And I'll soon be out of this state. I'm going to get away tomorrow, if I have to walk."

"You can't get away without seeing Catharine," said Doby with determination. "You can say something that will make her feel a little better, anyway."

"I don't want to see her, Doby. I'd make a fool of myself, certainly. Couldn't you make up a little speech to her, and credit it to me?"

Doby was silent. Presently he rose and stepped to the edge of the arbour and peered through the darkness toward the road.

"What's this?" he exclaimed. "Must be the whole college coming out to spend the night with you."

I took my position beside Doby, and looked toward the road. At first I could see nothing; but presently I made out a dark mass that seemed to be approaching from the direction of the town. The gate creaked on its hinges. Presently the figure of a man crossed the court. He paused before the door and looked up at the light streaming from the transom. Suddenly

the door burst open and the Pests rushed out. The man leapt for our arbour, but before he could reach it Chig had him by the collar.

“Who the devil ah you?” cried Chig fiercely.

“Ah’m just a po’ strangeh lookin’ foh some place to pass the night.”

“You ah, ah you?—Say, you fellows, go roun’ the cawnah of the house and take a few shots at the gate, just foh luck.”

Barker, Pug and McGillicuddy dashed around the house. There was a volley of shots, and the black mass on the road halted. More shots, and the mass began to move in the opposite direction. Its speed increased and soon it dissolved into scattering black points moving swiftly in the darkness.

“Didn’t they skedaddle?” cried Barker, as the three joined Chig and his victim in the court.

“Now you can tell us who the devil you ah,” said Chig savagely. “You ah one of them po’ white trash from the flats. Thought you’d have a little fun, hey? Well, you ah suhtainly goin’ to have it. Mac, you run into the study and get that lantern. We’ll take a look at this vehmin.”

“Let me go, suh,” pleaded the victim. “I wasn’t in that crowd, ’deed I wasn’t.”

“No, you wasn’t,” replied Chig scornfully. “You wuh just spyin’ foh them. Po’ devils, theh wuh only

about a hund'ed of 'em. They didn't daih to come alone. They wuh afraid they might find a man heah."

"And they done it!" exulted Barker.

"Here's your light," cried McGillicuddy, holding the sputtering lantern above his head. "Now for a look at this gentleman."

"Oh, po' mizzable wohm!" said Chig. "What ah we goin' to do with him, fellows? Buhn him alive, or skin him?"

"Buhnin' is too quick," suggested Pug.

"Skinnin' ain't hot enough," urged Barker.

"You thought you'd have a little fun with the Professoh," said Chig. "You thought he was a po', weak dood, same as they use to be. They make 'em diffeht nowadays. *I'm* Professoh Gresham. See me?" And Chig assumed a look of ferocity that, of itself, should be quite sufficient to clear all the Mexicans out of the Valley of the Lost River.

"These boys heah ah some of mah fellow-professohs I've invited out to a hand of cahds and a social jug. Take a look at 'em."

McGillicuddy stepped up and scowled into the victim's yellow face. Barker followed, with his most savage grin. Then came Pug, his whole face a bristly criss-cross of wrinkles.

"I'm the professoh of Greek!" he snarled. "Gubble, gubble, gubble! That's Greek. Or gobbler. It's

all the same to you. Wohm or po' white trash, you ah all the same to me."

"Fellow-professohs," said Chig in an oratorical tone, "we cain't affohd to waste ou' valuable time on this wuthless vehmin. He cain't even find a wuhd to say. Vehmin! See if you cain't jump the gate befo' we begin to shute."

He loosed his hold and the "vermin" darted into the darkness. There was a thud; he must have jumped the gate, or at any rate attempted it. Then a rapid patter of feet, directed toward.

"It's an everlastin' pity the Prof wasn't here," grumbled Barker disconsolately. "He missed the show of his life."

"What a hell of a reputation we gave them professohs up at the college," chuckled Pug.

"Only reputation they ever had in their lives," affirmed McGillicuddy.

"If we'd 'a' been a little latah and the Professoh had been heah, they'd 'a' done got him," said Chig soberly. "Nice bunch of fellows we ah, hang roun' that infuhnel Brazen Bah when we ought 'a' been on duty. We'll go in the house."

"Now, Doby, what do you think of that?" I demanded.

"I can't believe it, hardly. No, sir, I can't believe it."

"It looks as if I were to get out of Texas all there is in it, doesn't it?"

"You ain't going to stay in this house another minute," Doby declared. "Come on, we'll go over home and I'll drive you down to the University Hotel."

"Don't you think I'm safe enough for tonight?" I laughed. "And tomorrow night I'll be out of Asuncion."

Doby reflected. "I guess they can protect you, all right. But, Gresham, you've got to see Catharine before you go. I'll have her ride by here, tomorrow afternoon. You can tell her you'll never forget her. You can tell her you'll always keep her image in your heart. Those things ain't so, but it won't hurt you to say them. And they'll do her lots of good. Good night, old man. God bless you!"

"Hooray, Prof!" roared the Pests in chorus as I opened the door. "We reckoned you wuh lost."

"I'm late," I admitted. "Have I missed anything?"

"Bet your life!" cried Barker. "The Philistines came, and we routed them with a jawbone. Chig's jawbone."

"Barker," said Chig with a touch of severity, "you ah sometimes entiahly too familiah.—Thuh was a kind of a mob heah, suh, lookin' foh you, I reckon. We fellows loafed around a cheap, mizzable bah, suh, and

got heah just in time to scattah them. We ah suhtainly ashamed foh exposin' you to the risk, suh."

"Boys," I said, "I'm with you for Mexico."

"Hooray!" The canteens were again drawn upon, and the town gossips next day circulated the rumour that the professor who had been dismissed celebrated another night in drunken rioting.

CHAPTER XXXV

SPOILING THE EGYPTIAN

It was late in the morning when I awakened, quite unrefreshed. I dressed and set out to find my protectors, the Pests. They had departed for the day. There was no sound of life in the kitchen. I rapped on the door leading to the servants' rooms, and called for Wesley and Fanny Zephrina. There was no response. I opened the door. The negroes had evidently gathered their belongings and taken to flight. Life in the service of a college professor had too many terrors for a peace-loving pair like them.

I returned to my room to pack my goods for my own departure. There was no longer a single reason for remaining in Asuncion, and many excellent reasons for getting away. Of these the one which was most imperative was that Catharine had returned. I had made up my mind that she should never suspect how thoroughly the events of the last three weeks had demoralised my existence. It would do her no good, and it would humiliate me. I should see her again in the afternoon, and I knew very well that the interview would tax my resolution pretty thoroughly. I should be sorely tempted to linger about Asuncion for weeks, in a futile,

unmanly fashion, hoping to pick up a few crumbs of my former happiness. No, I must get away this very day. But how? I hadn't any money. Doby had none. If the Pests had enough to carry them to the Mexican border, it was fairly certain they had none to finance such a useless encumbrance as I should be.

Nevertheless, I could not remain: it was best to proceed with my packing. I took my clothes from their hooks in the closets and threw them on the bed. What was I to take with me? If I were going to Mexico, I had practically no apparel worth putting in my bag. I looked with disdain upon the array of suits I had had made up in New York for my use in Texas. That frock coat, for example. Too hot to wear except on the few days when the northers blew, days when all social life was suspended, anyway. On my closet shelf was a silk hat, that had lain dormant ever since I settled in my house. Nothing but a funeral or a wedding would justify the wearing of such a hat in Texas. All this useless clothing I would gladly have exchanged for one suit of honest khaki fit for a filibuster's wear. Why hadn't old Nathan stripped me of my clothing as well as of my house?

As I pondered thus I became aware of the sound of carriage wheels, apparently on my premises. I opened a shutter and looked out. It was old Nathan himself, driving about my grounds, satisfying himself, no doubt,

as to the value of his new property. I had made his acquaintance at the Utriusque Club, and had disliked him from the first. He was a tall, robust man, with an acquisitive nose and dominating eye. He affected a brusqueness of manner that stood him in good stead in his piratical real-estate deals. He reminded me of the large hawks that used to swoop down upon my father's chicken yard. As I watched him from my window I realised how the panic-stricken chickens felt when they sought shelter from their enemy. For me there was no shelter,—save Eleanor Hinckley Jones.

I withdrew from the window and seated myself in an arm-chair. An idea seemed to be forming in my mind; what about, I couldn't divine. Eleanor Hinckley Jones. Blessed name! I had it now! I doffed my workaday coat and put on a gaily checkered waistcoat and my frock coat. I brushed the dust off my silk hat and smoothed it down. A prolonged search produced a pair of unused white gloves. I was ready to emerge.

As I descended the steps I kept my eyes on the ground, as if unaware of the presence of Mr. Nathan, who was eying me narrowly from a distance of fifty feet. I walked to a rose-bush and plucked a full-blown red rose and tried it in my buttonhole. I inspected it critically, decided against it and threw it away. Next I tried a bud with five slits of red just showing through the green. This, too, I condemned and threw

away. A half-opened bud seemed to meet my fancy. I plucked it triumphantly, put it in my buttonhole and strutted about, admiring it. Then I allowed myself suddenly to catch sight of Mr. Nathan, standing by his carriage and staring at me.

“Good morning, Mr. Nathan,” I shouted gaily, approaching him with as tripping a gait as a philosopher can assume. “You just had to get out of town, such a fine morning, didn’t you? There is nothing like the country! In my opinion, when Texas finds herself, she’ll refuse to live in walled cities like Asuncion.”

“Perhaps,” said Mr. Nathan coolly. “For myself, I like to brush my shoulders against my fellow-man’s. These suburban places seem to me dreary beyond measure.”

“That’s just because you have no imagination, Mr. Nathan,” I retorted. “That stream, for example. It looks like an open sewer now. But wait until I get a dam built and the banks terraced. I’m going to have a pretty little lake full of water hyacinths. At the edge of the water I’ll have masses of elephant’s ears, droopy and cool and green; the next terrace will be a soft mat of Bermuda grass, with clumps of Cape jessamines, fragrant enough to put you to sleep the moment you enter my gate. That ragged hedge I’ll have all trimmed up, and I think I can make Gingko trees grow on my

side of it—all festoons of green, you know, the most summery green in the world.”

“You are very imaginative, sir,” said Mr. Nathan satirically.

“The house is charming as it is; don’t you think so?”

“Opinions differ, Mr. Gresham. I wouldn’t have built in just that way. In the first place, I think you made a mistake in your construction material. We in Texas like frame construction—white and yellow colonial, with wide galleries, screened in, and plenty of big fluted columns. What possessed you to build of this cheap native rock? You Northerners may like rock, but here we use it for negro cabins. ‘An ol’ rock house,’ that’s how they describe your place in town. And those arches—they make the house look like an old mission. Those wretched second-hand doors; you could have got magnificent cypress doors at the lumber yard for ten dollars apiece. I may be too frank, Mr. Gresham, but I don’t like your house. I don’t like it at all.”

I laughed. “I see I could never please you, Mr. Nathan. Fortunately, it isn’t necessary. This house pleases me. And, what is more important, it pleases Mrs. Gresham.”

“Mrs. Gresham!” exclaimed Mr. Nathan. “Why, I understood that you were a bachelor, Mr. Gresham.”

“What do you Texas people know about the history of a man who comes to sojourn a little while among you, I’d like to know? For all you know, Mr. Nathan, I may have several wives scattered around in the North.”

“I have always understood that an institution of learning satisfied itself as to a man’s morals before it offered him an appointment,” said Mr. Nathan severely.

I laughed again. “You don’t deserve it, Mr. Nathan, but I’m going to take you into my confidence. I’ll shock your high moral sense, I know, but such a very high moral sense as yours needs a little shocking. There is no Mrs. Gresham, yet. There will be one in a few hours.”

Mr. Nathan eyed me silently. Incredulity was his dominant expression, but one could detect in his face an indignation growing with belief. I removed my silk hat and wiped my brow. His eyes rested upon the hat for a moment and then ran rapidly over my clothes. It was working! There was less incredulity in his face and more indignation.

“Do you know Ellsworth?” I asked, dropping my voice to a confidential tone. “When all that row came off over at the college, somebody suggested to me that Ellsworth would try to do me out of my house. You know, he has a few of my notes—a little matter of twenty-seven hundred dollars or so. They are tech-

nically due, and I couldn't possibly raise the money to meet them in less than two or three months. I thought: Ellsworth is an honest man; he'll never join that pack of scoundrels who are trying to do me. But yesterday I met him, and his manner was entirely changed. He got out of my way as soon as he could. I may not be a practical man, Mr. Nathan, but I know the signs of a bad conscience when I see them. Well, those notes are entirely unsecured. He wasn't even business man enough to slap a mechanic's lien on the property. So I've got him. I've arranged to get married today, and slip under the protection of the Homestead law."

"Mr. Gresham," exclaimed Mr. Nathan, "your scheme is dishonorable! Disreputable, I might say."

"Wait a bit, Mr. Nathan. What do you think of the schemes of a disgusting old scoundrel who wants to do me out of a thirteen-thousand-dollar house for a twenty-seven-hundred-and-fifty-dollar debt?"

"Why, I should say he was playing the game according to the rules. You proceeded recklessly, building on credit without knowing where payment was to come from. You are pinched: you have nothing to complain of."

"All right," I replied dispassionately. "So am I playing the game according to the rules. One of the rules in Texas is your wonderful Homestead law. Ells-

worth tried to do me. That is right and moral, in Texas. I do him. That is also right and moral. If he had been a little less moral and righteous, I'd have paid him his debt in full. As it is, he may whistle. I hope he'll go whistling up and down the streets of Asuncion like a circus siren."

Mr. Nathan was plainly very angry now. "May I ask, sir," he inquired scornfully, "who this lady is who has consented to be an accomplice in your scheme of cheating a poor man out of his rightful dues?"

"I can't tell you her name, Mr. Nathan. For all I know, you may be in similar straits, and might try to cut me out. I'm sure she'd as lief have you as me."

"Ah, I see! This is not exactly what you call a love match."

"Yes, it is. She has forty-five hundred dollars in the bank."

"Doubtless she is a very handsome person?"

"Yes. She has forty-five hundred dollars in the bank."

"Perhaps she intends to pay off those notes of Mr. Ellsworth's?"

"Not a bit of it. I suggested it, but she said it would be wholly unnecessary."

"Apparently she knows the value of money. That is not a usual accomplishment of our charming Southern women."

"But she *is* charming," I insisted. "I told you she has forty-five hundred dollars in the bank."

"Maybe she has. That isn't saying you have it."

"Oh, good Heavens, no! Do you suppose I'd be marrying her if I had so much money? But I figure, if she has forty-five hundred dollars, I ought to be able to wheedle five hundred dollars out of her. That's not unreasonable, is it?"

"You seem to want five hundred dollars pretty badly, don't you?"

"I certainly do. Five hundred dollars would take me to New York, and keep me until I could find something to do. I'm going to have it, if I have to steal it."

"So you are going to add to—well, your moral act in cheating Mr. Ellsworth, the equally moral act of robbing your bride and deserting her?"

"Your morality becomes a little tiresome, Mr. Nathan." I affected irritation. "She isn't marrying me. She's marrying a very comfortable house. I am just an encumbrance, which she would repudiate like Mr. Ellsworth's notes, if only the Homestead law extended to the case. She gets rid of me at a cost of only five hundred dollars. The benefit is cheap at the price, isn't it? Really, Mr. Nathan, if you had me on your hands, wouldn't you grasp at the chance to pay five hundred dollars to get rid of me?"

“I believe I’d try choking or poison first.” Mr. Nathan smiled grimly. “Those methods failing, I might give five hundred dollars, with the proviso that neither you nor any of your tribe should ever again sully the dust of the State of Texas.”

“You are a very liberal man, Mr. Nathan,” I said gaily. “You fill me with admiration, and stir in me the desire to be a better man. I must bid you good-bye now; I’m off for the ceremony.” And I made a wry face.

“Have you thought of Mr. Ellsworth’s wife and children? You know, Mr. Gresham, Ellsworth is a poor man. Always on the verge of bankruptcy. Your action in repudiating his just claims may deal him a blow from which he will never recover.”

“Ellsworth, Ellsworth! I’m tired of hearing about him! If you take his case so much to heart, why don’t you do something for him yourself? You’re rich, they say, and can afford it. Give me five hundred dollars, and I’ll deed you the place with the stipulation that you assume the debts. Be generous at your own expense, for once in your life, or talk less morally.”

I turned away and walked rapidly toward the house.

“Mr. Gresham!” called Nathan, hurrying after me. “I’ll take your offer. Such a man as you ought to be kicked out of the state without a cent. But I can’t

stand by and allow poor Ellsworth to be cheated out of everything he has."

When I left Mr. Nathan's office my spirits were lighter than they had been for many days. I had signed a paper transferring my house, not to Mr. Nathan, by the way, but to Mr. Allen. And my pocket was weighed down with five hundred dollars in shining gold pieces, that clinked of liberty as I walked. It was not, however, the money that gave me such a complacent feeling: it was the way I got it. In a super-refined age like this, what men pride themselves upon is most frequently some primordial trait condemned by evolution to extinction, but surviving by nature's oversight. I have known in my time a most pious, earnest and eloquent pastor, a terror to the wicked and an incense lamp to righteousness in his community. And what did he pride himself upon, in his secret heart? Not upon his good works, multitudinous as his hours. No: upon his ability to suspend his body for minutes and minutes by a rope held in his teeth. Why, then, should not a philosopher take pride in the successful exercise of low cunning? I had practised Mr. Nathan, or perhaps Mr. Allen, out of five hundred dollars. And my satisfaction was not reduced by the way Mr. Nathan behaved when, with the money safe in my pocket, I explained to him how the trick was turned.

In an hour I had returned to my house and entered upon the labours of packing my effects. I had money in my pocket now; not much money, to be sure, but enough to enable me to view things once more in their true proportions. Penniless, I had accepted Mexico; with money, I dismissed the filibustering expedition as a project too wild to be entertained for one moment. My resolutions were bent upon New York.

And yet it was impossible to fix my attention upon the details of packing. In an hour, or two, or at most three, I should see Catharine.

CHAPTER XXXVI

THE CUCKOO'S EGG BROKEN

THE wisdom I had acquired with such pain in the last weeks seemed to be slipping away from me. I clung to it with might and main; yet I could not expel from my mind a desperate regret that my life in Asuncion was already wound up. If Catharine was willing to see me, she had probably forgiven me, and if she had forgiven me, our former relations could be re-established. But, if my folly in pursuing the project of a marriage with Catharine had been reprehensible before, it would be almost criminal to prey upon her generosity now. It would have been far better, I felt, if I could have got away without seeing her at all. There was no avoiding it, however. All I could do was to fortify my resolution by getting my trunks packed as soon as possible.

I must confess that a good many minutes of time that should have been devoted to packing were wasted in running to my living-room, whose rear windows commanded the gate and the road beyond. Although I had engaged old Uncle Daniel, who had happened along, to sit at the servants'-room window to report to me if any one stopped at the gate, the illusory conviction

kept recurring to me that Catharine was already there, waiting.

My bell rang. I ran to the door. Catharine must have come by the path, I thought. But it was Lucile. She was very pale and her eyes looked weary. None the less, I realised better than I had realised before that Doby's estimate was right, she was a wonderfully beautiful woman.

"I thought I'd never see you again, Lucile," I said, taking the hand she offered.

"You are to change your plans," said Lucile. "You are not to go away."

"But, Lucile, I must. There is nothing left for me in Asuncion."

"I have made you much trouble," said Lucile sadly. "I haven't the least idea why I did it. But we'll all forget that, won't we?"

"Lucile, the only thing I'm going to remember about Asuncion is how very good you've all been to me."

"Remembering isn't what I want," said Lucile. "I want everything to be just as it was before."

"But it can't be," I said. "You know there were many things before that were folly. I am much wiser now. So is Catharine, no doubt."

"Listen," said Lucile. "It wasn't folly. Not at all. Catharine and I will always be neighbours."

"Does that mean, Lucile, that you would have given

your consent?" I asked. An unmanly disposition to quiver was coming over me.

"Of course, I give my consent. If you hadn't made such a secret of it, you would have had my consent from the beginning and none of this trouble could have come on at all."

"You hadn't a right to give your consent, Lucile," I said weakly. "You know I wasn't able to provide for Catharine properly."

"That is your one great fault," said Lucile reproachfully. "You are mercenary. You are always thinking about money. But all men are that way, and so I overlook it."

"I'm not thinking of money for myself."

"No. But a woman who is in love doesn't think of money at all. Catharine doesn't. I never do. Don't ever mention money to me again."

"But, Lucile, one must when one hasn't any. You know, I've lost my position."

"What does that matter? It never did amount to anything, anyway."

"It didn't amount to much, to be sure, but it was all I had to live on. And I've lost my house."

"Lost your house!" exclaimed Lucile aghast. "What do you mean? Do you mean you've sold your house?"

"Yes," I said. It was the easiest explanation.

“You had no right to sell your house,” said Lucile indignantly. “It wasn’t your house. It was Catharine’s. Every idea in that house is Catharine’s, and you know it.”

“Yes, of course I do.”

“Listen!” And Lucile assumed her old peremptory tone. “You are to buy it back right away. Do you hear?”

“But suppose I haven’t the money?”

“Then borrow it. You are to buy it back, no matter what it costs. Listen! I don’t want to see you again until you’ve done it. And you’re not to see Catharine. Do you hear?”

“Yes,” I said meekly. Lucile made a little bow, and was gone.

Oh, Heavens, what a heavy cross is packing when you don’t want to go, but must!

Uncle Daniel rapped on my door. “Miss Catharine am in de coah, Mistah Gresham.”

“If I only had some of Doby’s ‘Three Thistles’ in my soul, it would be well for me now,” I said to myself. It’s a desperately hard thing to behave like a man when your universe has crumbled away without sufficient reason.

The white rage had gone out of Catharine and she seemed quite limp as she sat uneasily upon her filly. The filly, too, had lost its spirit, and stood

with head down, pawing the dead grass in a futile fashion.

"I've come back," said Catharine in a faint voice.

"God bless you for it, Catharine. But I am going away."

"I've heard of your trouble at the college," Catharine said with an attempt at a cheerful tone. "But I'm going to make President Brett take you back."

"He can't do it. Besides, it's best for me to go back to my own people for a while. I've been sorely whipped, and I need to rest."

"But what will you do with our house?" asked Catharine gently. "I can't let you close it up. It would get all damp and musty."

"It isn't our house any longer, Catharine."

"What! You didn't sell it?"

"No. They have taken it away from me; I couldn't help it."

Catharine turned her face away. "After all," she said in an uncertain voice. "It's too big a house for us. What I should like best is just a tiny little house, big enough for two, down near the college. Did you know that my grandmother was a famous cook? I'm going to be the best housekeeper in Asuncion."

"Oh, Catharine, you could live in poverty without reproaching me, but I couldn't endure it. Now, do please leave me. I'm trying very hard to behave manfully:

that's how I want you to remember me. The part doesn't come easily. Do go, please."

Catharine's face was turned away from me. Slowly she drew up the reins. A little hand waved me adieu as the filly rounded the house.

Now, for Heaven's sake, to be away! I threw myself upon my packing, and jumbled my possessions helter-skelter into the trunks. I called Uncle Daniel to help me rope them and to carry them to the express wagon, which had backed into the court. Until Mr. Nathan should take possession, Uncle Daniel was to keep the house open for my friends, the Pests. I desired greatly to see them again, to explain my desertion, but, as they would probably not return before my train started, I left a letter for them.

When I reached Main Street I discussed with myself the problem whether I should go to the Farmers' and Merchants' building to bid good-bye to Doby. But I had already as much of the kind of emotion attending adieus as I could well endure. There was an hour and a half to spare before my train would leave. What should I do with it?

"I can't just walk the street an hour and a half," I said to myself. "I'm going over to Pergolino's Garden; maybe the old pirate will look me out of Asuncion. I certainly need something of the kind."

The garden was again deserted. As I seated myself

in a sunny spot—for I was shivering with the cold—the red dress issued from the building and moved rapidly toward me.

“You did not come yesterday,” said Elena, seating herself opposite me and resting her exquisite round arms on the table.

“No. Did you expect me?”

“Yes. And I expected you the day before.”

“I was afraid of your father’s eyes.”

“I have those eyes upon me every day,” said Elena.

“And those other eyes—they are worse.”

“But the other eyes are far away.”

“My father has gone to San Antonio to meet him on business. He will come tomorrow.”

Poor Elena! What hideous arrangements, those state alliances between fruit dealers and restaurant keepers!

“When do you go to New York?” asked Elena after a pause.

“Today.”

“Take me with you.”

“Elena,” I said, trying to muster my wits, “you are the most beautiful woman I have ever seen, except one. I am still in love with that one.”

“It does not matter. You have lost that one.”

“You do not care the least bit about me, Elena.”

“It doesn’t matter.”

“I never should be able to understand you at all.”

“It doesn’t matter. You never will understand any woman.”

“No, and it’s a good thing. I’d be an abject slave if I did. But what does matter, Elena, I haven’t any money. What would we two do in New York without money?”

“You would work. And I would work, too.”

“You work, Elena? Let me look at your hands.”

“They are strong hands. See.” And she held out her hand to let me try its grasp. It was warm and strong and tingling. Her eyes were upon me, and I began to feel hypnotised. After all, I caught myself thinking, why not? Was not this little hand enough for any one? And what else had I under the sun?

“No, Elena,” I said, recovering myself. “You are a creature of the sunlight, and I am at home only in the fog. We should die in each other’s presence.”

Elena gazed at me silently. There was not the slightest change in her expression. Her dark pupils surveyed me exactly as they did the first day I entered the Garden. Yet it seemed to me that their meaning was an entirely new one. I began to feel very much disconcerted, and rose to go.

“The Professor has been whipped,” said Elena slowly. “But not enough to learn.”

“No, Elena. He was of poor quality, and the whip-

ping has profited him little. It would have been wiser to knock him in the head and start with a better subject."

"Yes," said Elena.

I retreated. "Unfit for survival," I said to myself as I made my way to the station. I took refuge in my Pullman, to wear out the remaining long minutes.

O Texas, land of sun and flowers! Land of vast deserted spaces, now: what will it be in the future, when the Gulf and the Caribbean become the reversed Mediterranean of a world's greater civilisation? Florida, a low-lying Hispania; the Mississippi, a grandiose Rhone; Mexico, a Syria of mountain and desert, of morose, dark peoples with strange, hot enthusiasms; the Orinoco Valley, a more fertile Egypt; the Antilles, more spacious Ionian Isles. Bright cities will fringe the great sea, and white ships in infinite number will ply over its blue waters. Life will here build itself lofty temples of faith and beauty. And Texas? The point where dark and white, hot blood and cold blood mix: the Greece and Rome of the newer and greater world.

Texas and the civilisation it is destined to dominate are at present only in germ. But, even now, no locomotive could drag away one who had not been proved unfitted for survival there. Catharine, Doby and Lucile; President Brett, of imperishable personal dignity; Pergolino's daughter, for ever the same and

for ever beautiful. Where but in Texas can one find their like?

The locomotive gave a strong pull, and a jolting motion travelled from car to car. We were off! I looked through the window at the station platform slipping past with a speed gradually increasing. There was a jerk and the train stopped.

“Hey, boy!” It was Doby who had me by the shoulders. “Come out of here!” He pulled me out of my seat and hustled me down the aisle toward the rear exit.

“Who pulled that rope?” shouted the conductor from the forward end of the car, running after us, with angry gestures.

“I did,” said Doby, glowering fiercely over his shoulder. “Open that door! This man is under arrest.”

The conductor opened the door and Doby sprang to the platform, pulling me after him. The door closed and the train began to move again.

“By orders of Catharine!” said Doby, with a note of finality.

“Very sweet in her,” I said, waiting in desperation for a chance to spring upon the step of another car. “It’s awfully good in you to come to see me off, Doby. But I can’t miss this train. My ticket isn’t good on the next.”

“You’re going to miss it,” Doby declared, throwing

his long arms about me and whirling me around in a grotesque waltz. "Old man, we're rich! Allen's dropped dead of a stroke. Lucile's got a million; and Catharine's got a million of her own! *And* your House of Vain Hopes. Dance, confound you! If you don't dance now, you stiff old pedagogue, I'm sure going to stand you up against the wall and shoot at your toes!"

THE END

